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03

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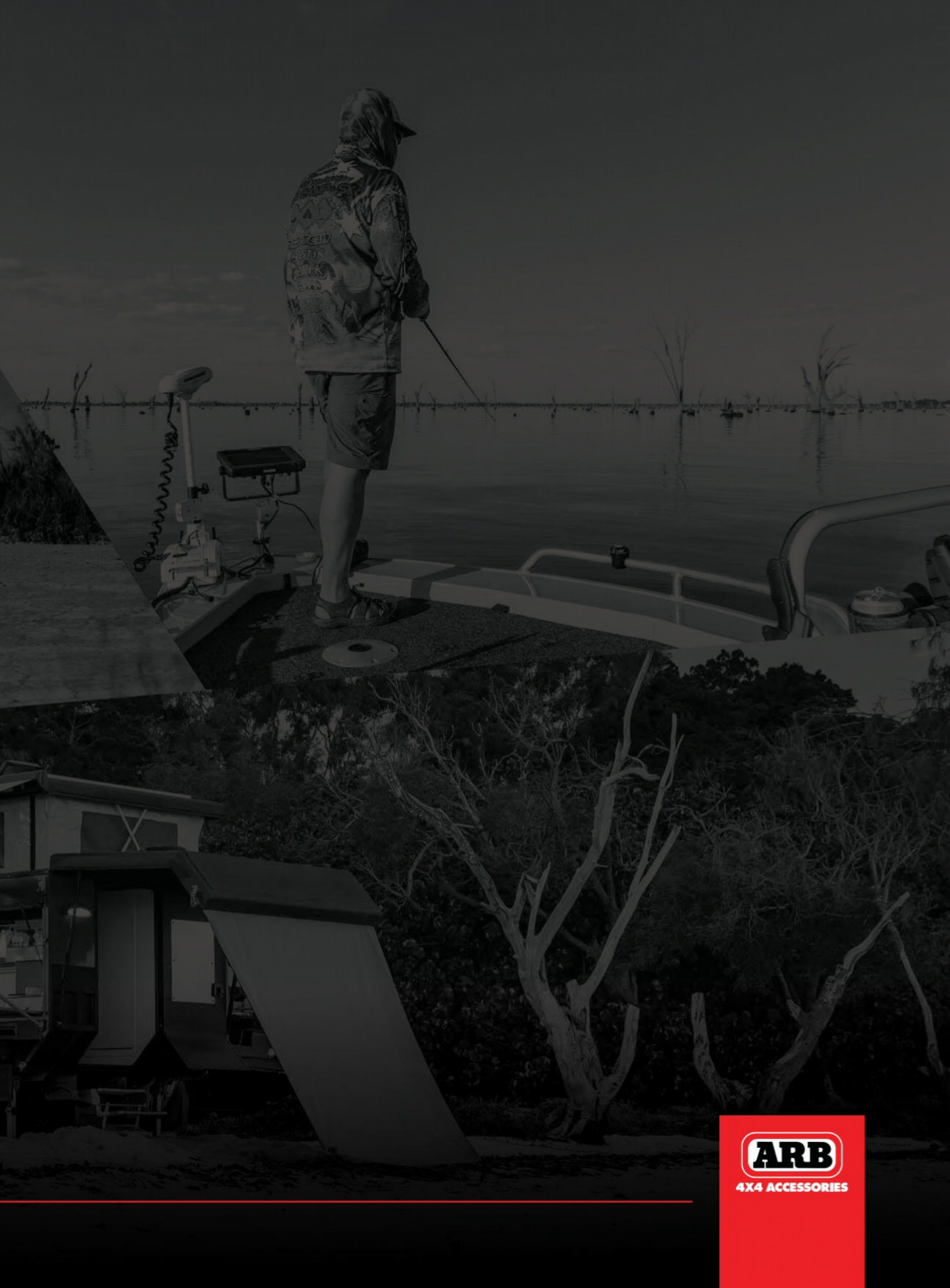
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FEBRUARY 2020

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OF THE
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Well, you can read that for yourself...



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4WORD

MATT RAUDONIKIS

HAND IN HAND

FOR YEARS, new car dealers have shuddered at the potential money they could be making when they see the 4x4 vehicles they just sold being driven off the lot and around the corner to the local 4x4 accessories outfitter, where the owner then spends another \$10K, \$20K or even \$30K (or more) on the new truck.

The smarter vehicle manufacturers have developed extensive ranges of factory made and approved accessories to tempt the buyer into spending more with at the dealer, but most enthusiasts prefer the kit to come from a company that knows what we do with our 4x4s and how to make the gear to better prepare the cars for this use.

More often than not the OE accessories would be made to the company's specification by a recognised 4x4 accessories manufacturer and then sold to the car company unbranded, yet buyers still prefer to have known brands on their trucks.

It put a smile on my face to see the Ford Rangers on display at the SEMA Show wearing steel bumpers and the "Ford Performance by ARB" badge. ARB has previously made bullbars for OEMs, but this is the first time I've seen it acknowledged on the product. Ford recognises that enthusiasts like to have

name brands on their cars and is capitalising on it with ARB and with the Fox Shocks it fits to its Ford Performance Raptor models. Isn't it great to see Australia's ARB getting such recognition worldwide?

The Ford Performance stand at SEMA had a host of name-brand accessories for US-Ranger buyers including ARB bars, Fox suspension, Yakima storage and Warn recovery products. Each of these brand names are loved and used by 4x4 enthusiasts. Wouldn't it be nice to see such product on offer here?

OEMs working with third-party companies has taken a huge step further with the turnkey vehicles featured in this issue, with RTR working in close collaboration with Ford, and AEV with General Motors. These partnerships provide a win-win-win situation for the vehicle manufacturer, the tuner and the buyer, as you are getting a new car with improved performance and styling from recognised companies, built to OE quality standards and with factory warranty and support. It's a trend we can see in the USA and we look forward to seeing it take off here.

Matt



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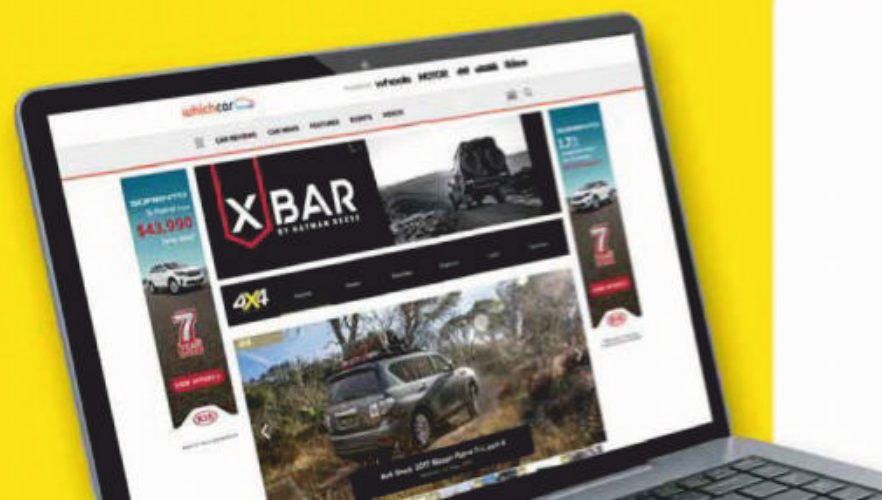
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CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE

VISITORS to our digital space at 4x4australia.com.au will notice our homepage resides at whichcar.com.au/4x4australia.

All remains the same, with up-to-date news stories, in-depth new-car analysis and insane custom write-ups. We'll also tick more travel items off our bucket-list, and continue to bring you the best aftermarket product advice from gear manufactured here and abroad. Alongside our 4x4-related content, you'll also be able to find the best of motoring on the new website, with our sister magazines *MOTOR*, *Street Machine* and *Wheels* all just a convenient click away.



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GO YOUR OWN WAY

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4CAST

NEWS AND VIEWS

HUMMER SET TO RETURN AS AN ELECTRIC VEHICLE

GENERAL MOTORS IS SET TO REVIVE THE HUMMER AS AN ALL-ELECTRIC PICK-UP TRUCK BY 2022.

WORDS MATT RAUDONIKIS

GENERAL MOTORS is planning to bring back its Hummer nameplate and turn the tables on its past reputation as a gas-guzzling SUV brand. The Hummer name is reportedly coming back in 2022 and will be applied to a range of electric pick-up trucks to be sold under the GMC brand.

EV trucks are becoming big news

in the US, with the likes of the Tesla Cybertruck, Rivian R1T and even the iconic Ford F-Series making headlines as they approach series production.

As part of its bankruptcy proceeding in 2009, General Motors announced it would discontinue manufacturing the H2 and H3 models and would sell its troubled Hummer brand to a Chinese

manufacturer. However, the deal fell through following Chinese government intervention and the brand has been lying idle ever since.

Fast forward a decade and GM will resurrect the nameplate for its EV trucks, in a move that could bring some perceived ruggedness to the yet-to-be-seen electric vehicles.

H3T

The Colorado-based H3T pick-up ute had a brief pulse back in 2009-2010.



GMC currently offers a range of three pick-up trucks, including the midsize Canyon, the 1500-class Sierra and Sierra Denali, and the 2500-Sierra HD. The GMC Canyon is related to the Chevrolet Colorado in its underpinnings, while the Sierra models share their platforms with the Chevrolet Silverado 1500 and 2500 variants.


It remains unknown as to which GMC models will get the EV treatment and Hummer badge, but you would expect the popular Denali/1500-sized pick-up would be obvious starters, followed by the midsize Canyon. Or could the Hummer name be applied to a bespoke line of vehicles?

THE MOVE COULD BRING SOME PERCEIVED RUGGEDNESS TO THE YET-TO-BE-SEEN ELECTRIC VEHICLES

Late in 2019 General Motors announced a US \$1.5 billion investment in its Wentzville, Missouri, plant to “bring its next generation of midsize pick-up trucks to market”.

The Wentzville plant has produced the GMC Canyon and Chevrolet Colorado twins since the brand re-introduced its mid-size trucks in 2017, to compete with the Toyota Tacoma and Ford Ranger.

Unlike the Hummer H1 which was a civilianised version of the HMMWV military vehicle made by AM General, the H2 and H3 SUVs were based on GM’s 1500 and Colorado midsize pick-up platforms respectively and included the H3T Colorado-based pick-up.

There is no official word yet on what form the GMC Hummer EVs will take as they are not expected to be revealed until 2021. Nor is there any word on whether the Hummer brand will make it back to our shores as an EV. 

WORDS MATT RAUDONIKIS

LAND ROVER BUYS BOWLER MOTORSPORT

JLR BOLSTERS ITS SVO DIVISION WITH THE ACQUISITION OF THE RALLY RAID SPECIALIST.

JAGUAR Land Rover has purchased the Derbyshire-based rally raid specialist outfit Bowler Motorsport, to add to its Special Vehicles Operations (SVO) division. The product of founder Drew Bowler, Bowler Motorsports produced, raced, sold and supported rally raid-style vehicles, many of them Land Rover based, for 30 years up until Drew Bowler’s passing in 2016.

The pinnacle of Bowler’s vehicles were the radical Wildcat and (later) Nemesis models that had success in many of Europe and the UK’s top cross-country rallies. Bowler officially partnered with Land Rover in 2012, leading to the creation of the Defender Challenge by Bowler rally series in 2014-2016.


Since Drew Bowler’s death, the company has continued to produce performance vehicles for race and road and has integrated its extreme motorsport engineering and competition expertise into wider vehicle R&D programs. However, the vehicles were never as wild or exciting as those Wildcat and Nemesis rally-raid specials.

While we’re not expecting to see a Wildcat in Land Rover showrooms anytime soon, JLR plans to use Bowler’s tuning and development expertise to

bolster its Special Vehicles Operations (SVO) division. The question is, could the acquisition see Land Rover get more involved in motorsport, even as far as a factory-backed entry to cross-country rallying and ultimately the Dakar Rally.

“At Special Vehicle Operations we are all eager to start working with our new colleagues at Bowler,” said Michael van der Sande, Managing Director of Jaguar Land Rover Special Vehicle Operations. “Adding the Bowler team’s skills and experience to those of SV, Vehicle Personalisation and Classic is a key step in our strategy to create an exciting and diverse portfolio of products and businesses within Special Vehicle Operations.

“For almost 35 years the Bowler name has stood for innovation and success, with a reputation forged by its participation in the world’s toughest off-road motorsport competitions. It’s exciting that we’re now in a position to participate in and lead the Bowler brand’s future as part of Jaguar Land Rover.”

The Bowler team of more than 25 specialised staff will continue to operate out of the Derbyshire premises. 



The Bowler Wildcat (inset) was a cross-country rally beast.

DRIVE 4 LIFE TO TOUR THE OUTBACK IN 2020

IF YOU'VE EVER WANTED TO EXPLORE SOME OF LEN BEADELL'S AMAZING OUTBACK TRACKS, THE DRIVE 4 LIFE 2020 OUTBACK TOUR IS THE PERFECT OPPORTUNITY. ALL MONEY RAISED GOES TO A FANTASTIC CAUSE.

HOW WOULD you like to go on the trip of a lifetime with some of the country's most experienced 4x4 guides while raising much-needed funds for Northcott, to help support the organisation's network of disabled clients?

In 2020 the annual Drive 4 Life tour will traverse a number of Len Beadell's famous outback tracks on the western edge of the Nullarbor Plain, as it winds its way through spectacular country from Alice Springs in the Northern Territory to Balladonia in Western Australia.

The tour kicks off in the red centre capital of Alice Springs on August 6, 2020, and participants will traverse the Sandy Blight Junction Road, the Great Central Road and the Connie Sue Highway, finishing at Balladonia on the western edge of the Nullarbor Plain on August 15, 2020.

The 10-day adventure will take in remote outback tracks with loads of historical points along the way. The Sandy Blight Junction Road is often described as the most scenic of Len Beadell's tracks, whilst the Connie Sue Highway is another must-do for anyone who loves touring the great Australian outback.

Like all Drive 4 Life tours, a \$1000 donation (tax deductible) is payable direct to Northcott. Every cent donated goes directly to Northcott, while all organising and running costs of the Tour are borne by sponsors and the tour organisers. Drive 4 Life is sponsored by ARB 4X4 Accessories, IGA, 4X4 Australia and HEMA Maps. To date, Drive 4 Life has raised a whopping \$837,000 for Northcott.

For more information on Drive 4 Life and Northcott, check

out drive4life.com.au. You'll also find more details on the upcoming 2020 tour as well as a booking form and information about what you'll need to bring. You can also phone David Dennis on 0419 614 870 if you have more questions on the Drive 4 Life 2020 Outback Tour. **4x4**



Drive 4 Life held two epic tours in 2019, to the Vic High Country and Flinders Ranges (pictured).



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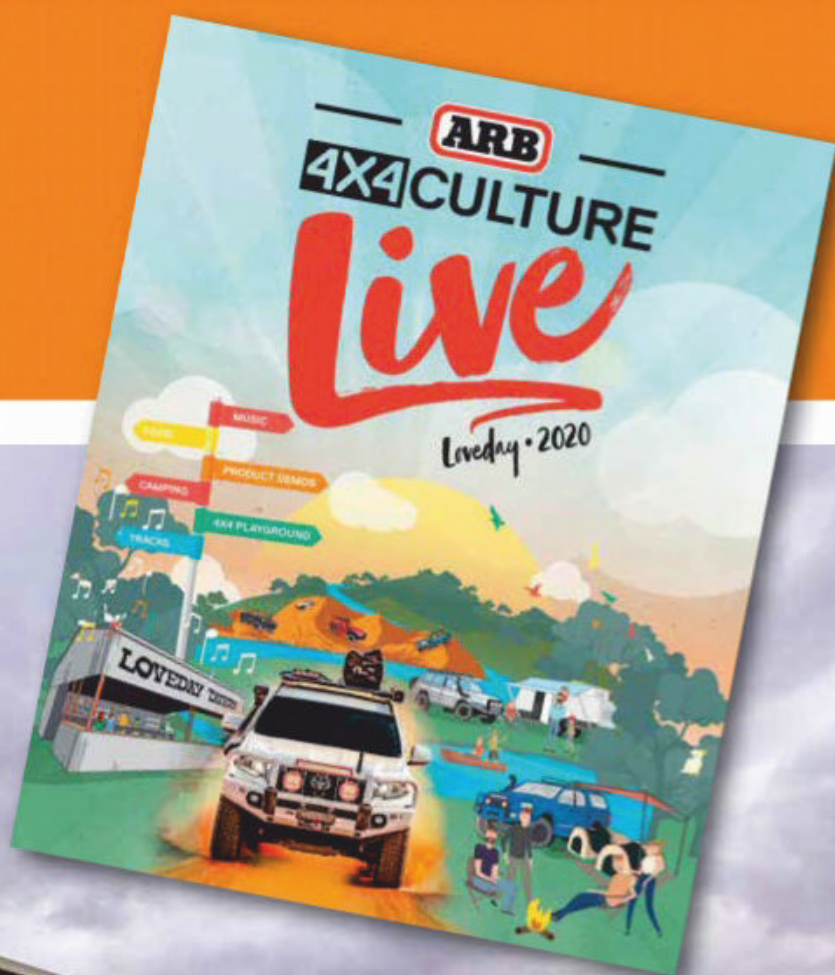
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TRAVEL BULLETIN

ALL THE LATEST 4X4 NEWS AND EVENTS



ARB CULTURE LIVE (SA)

The inaugural event will take place at Loveday 4x4 Adventure Park on March 21-22 and offer product demonstrations, expert advice, workshops, live music, food trucks, a moonlight cinema, a jumping castle and more. Tickets are \$150 adult; \$60 12-17yo; and \$35 5-11yo, which includes park access and camping fees (there's plenty of riverside camping). Half of all adult ticket sales will go to charities supporting the bushfire crisis. Visit: www.arb.com.au/4x4culture-live

TRACK DANGER (AUS)

Before Christmas we were spruiking Alpine NSW and the Vic High Country as ideal summer 4x4 destinations, but then the terrible fires hit the region, along with many other parts of the country. Bearing this in mind, many 4x4 tracks are closed, either due to continued fire danger or because of fallen trees and other debris. And if rain falls in fire-affected areas, conditions can deteriorate quickly, with severe track erosion the result. Before you jump in your 4x4 to head bush, check the status of any 4x4 tracks via your state fire service, state forest management or national parks, and always abide by fire bans.

HELPING FIRE-AFFECTED COMMUNITIES (AUS)

The recent bushfires have had a huge impact on many communities across Australia in many different ways and, as well as the loss of life and property, several regional towns have suffered from a huge loss in business as a result. You can help these communities by simply getting out there in your four-wheel drive and spending some money at local service stations, local shops, local cafes and eateries, local pubs and local motels. Make sure you research your intended destination before departing home to ensure that the roads are open and you'll be able to access these services.

ILLAWARRA CARAVAN CAMPING LIFESTYLE EXPO (NSW)

Those chasing a home on the road could do worse than check out all that's on offer at the Illawarra Caravan Camping Lifestyle Expo from February 14-16. Held at Kembla Grange Racecourse, the event showcases more than 100 exhibitors of caravans, campers and associated equipment. There will also be holiday park and destination exhibitors, free parking and free kids entertainment ... and you can even bring your dog. The gates are open 9.30am-5pm Friday and Saturday and 9.30am-4pm Sunday. See www.caravanexpo.com/illawarra/ for ticket prices and information.



VARIETY 4WD ADVENTURE (SA)

The 2020 Variety SA 4WD Adventure (Between a Rock and a Hard Place) is sold out, but you can register your interest in the 2021 edition on the event's website. For the record, the 2020 route kicks off on March 28 at Kulgera and takes in Uluru-Kata Tjuta, Kings Canyon, Boggy Hole, Hermannsburg, Henbury Meteorites Conservation Reserve, Lambert Centre of Australia, Mount Dare, Old Dalhousie Ruins, Oodnadatta and Arckaringa Station, finishing up on April 3. The main sponsor of the event is Jarvis Toyota and funds raised go to Variety the Children's Charity. See: variety.org.au/sa/events/4wd-adventure-2020

DLRA SPEED WEEK, LAKE GAIRDNER (SA)

The 30th Annual Speed Week will take place at Lake Gairdner from March 23-27. Hosted by Dry Lake Racers Australia (DLRA), this spectacular and unique event is all about straight-line speed. It's sometimes referred to as "the big white dyno", on which competitors simply go as fast as they can in cars, on motorcycles and in trucks dating from the turn of the century to the modern day. For more information, on this super-fast event check out: www.dlra.org.au



NATIONAL 4X4 OUTDOORS SHOW (QLD)

The expo will take place at the Brisbane Showgrounds from March 27-29, where more than 200 exhibitors will showcase the latest 4x4 and camping gear and provide expert advice on 4WDing, camping, fishing, boating and outdoor activities. There'll be test drives, seminars and 4x4 training. Gates open 9am-6pm Friday and Saturday, and 9am-5pm Sunday. See: 4x4show.com.au/Brisbane 



TECH TORQUE

FRASER STRONACH

THE BLACK ART OF SUSPENSION.

SUSPENSION. You probably think of it in terms of lift kits and making your 4x4 more capable off-road, which is a natural thing to do given ground clearance is the single most important attribute when it comes to how well a vehicle works off road.

But suspension is far more than that and is a make-or-break factor in how well your 4x4 works everywhere, on and off road. And while you may also think your suspension works harder off road than on road, it's more likely the reverse of that is true, depending of course on your particular on- and off-road driving regime.

What makes suspension work hard is not only the bumps and dips it has to cope with but the speed at which the vehicle is travelling when it hits these bumps and dips. At crawling pace – first gear, low range – no matter how big the bumps or deep the dips, your suspension doesn't work all that hard even if it is moving through its full travel. And under these conditions you don't even need particularly sophisticated suspension, as the dampers have less work to do. At absolute snail-pace driving, even with extreme full-travel conditions, you could even ditch the dampers to no great ill effect, especially with leaf springs with their inherent self-damping characteristics.

On-road driving – most obviously – brings in the element of higher vehicle speeds, and speed combined with bumps is where the suspension really has to start working hard. Not only that but dampers, which are largely irrelevant at off-road crawling pace, become the key ingredient even at moderate road speeds let alone at high road speeds. What's more, getting the damper tuning right is the key to getting the suspension to work well and is a more nuanced art than getting the spring rates right, which in comparison is a more straightforward engineering exercise.


All this is most important in Australia given there's a far greater distance of bumpy roads than smooth roads, and once you're in the country and away from any interstate expressway, it's all bumpy roads – to varying degrees – anyway. Getting the suspension on any vehicle working just right is a vital element to having the whole vehicle work on Australian roads. You can have a brilliant powertrain, but without a suspension that provides stability and agility where it's needed on all road surfaces it will be wasted.

The secret to having a suspension that works well on Australia's bumpy roads at higher speeds is longer-travel suspension architecture, as the more travel that's available to be used, the softer the springs

you can employ. Softer, long-travel suspension simply soaks up the bumps better. Drive a Ford Ranger Raptor if you're not convinced.

The key to this making long-travel suspension work are well-tuned dampers to control the spring movement. You also need dampers that stand up over time to all the work they have to do coping with bumpy roads traversed at speed.

Unfortunately, most new 4x4s (and cars more so) come with relatively low-quality dampers. Even if the as-new damper tune is okay, the dampers soon lose their ability to replicate the as-new damping force as the damping fluid breaks down and/or becomes aerated. It's a regular occurrence when we take away a new 4x4 for a week, or even a couple of days, and drive it over rough roads at normal touring speeds only to come back with suspension noticeably poorer for the experience.

The trouble is good quality dampers are expensive and, given each new 4x4 or car has four of them, the cost soon starts to add up for any manufacturer who wishes to use quality dampers instead of the usual budget items installed in vehicles produced in high volumes. And even with quality dampers you still need to get the tuning right, which is arguably the 'blackest' of all automotive arts. 



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FOOTLOOSE

RON MOON

DO YOU KNOW HOW TO SURVIVE A BUSHFIRE?

IT HAS BEEN a horror season for bushfires throughout Australia and we've still got a few months to go before there is any respite. It has affected the travel plans of hundreds, if not thousands, of people and, as I write this, holidaymakers along the Gippsland coast have been told it's too late to leave. At the same time, people on the south coast of NSW have been told to leave their homes and head for the beach.

We've been pretty lucky in all the years we've been travelling around Australia and through the bush, as we've never been really close to a fire. Sure, we had smoke all around us when we were rafting the Snowy River years ago, and then we had flames licking both sides of the track from burn-offs up north. More recently, while we were climbing out of the Wonnangatta River valley, my phone pinged; it was our *VicEmergency* app telling me that a bushfire was burning out of control not all that far away. We had to change our travel plans after that.

So, what do you do if a bushfire comes your way while out in the scrub?

Before you jump in the 4WD for that long-awaited getaway, check what the current fire levels are at for the area you are planning to visit and check the park websites for any fire warnings, and park and track closures.

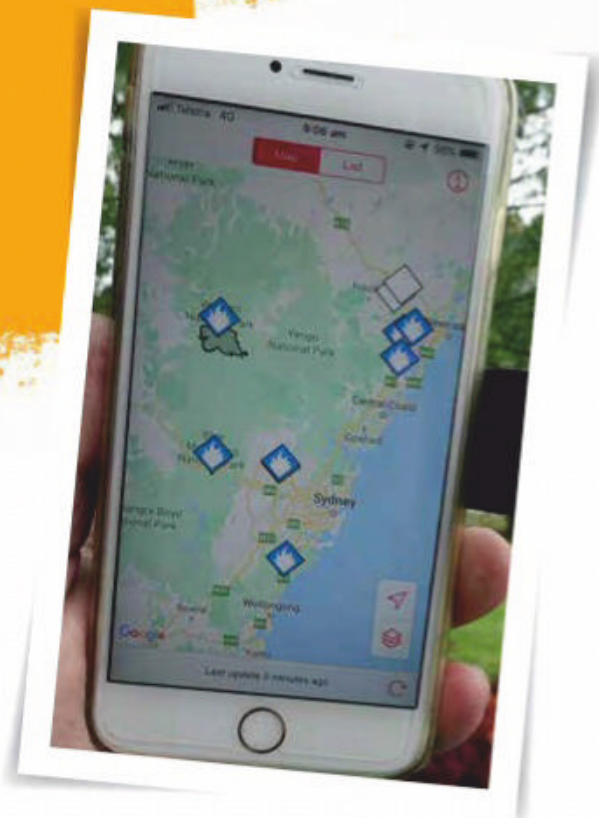
Many areas will be subject to Total Fire Bans and you need to know what you can and cannot do on a Total Fire Ban day. Understand, too, the different levels of the Fire Danger Ratings used throughout Australia – see: www.cfa.vic.gov.au/warnings-restrictions/about-fire-danger-ratings, or google 'CFA Fire Danger Ratings brochure'.

Parks, forests and reserves, if the last few years are anything to go by, will be closed due to extreme fire danger, so it pays to check before you set out and save a wasted journey. If you were thinking about a forest camp or somewhere remote surrounded by scrub and the day looks like being classed as an 'Extreme' or 'Code Red' day, I'd rethink the whole adventure.

When you are out in the scrub or travelling through fire-prone regions, listen to local radio stations for weather updates, fire bans and any active fires in your area. And if you are in mobile phone range, keep a close eye on the state's fire service phone apps such as *VicEmergency* or *FiresNearMe*. However, please don't rely solely on your phone and mobile reception – it's often non-existent in the areas we tend to visit.

Finally, if you are out in the bush and get caught in a fire, here's what you need to do:

- Call 000, if you can.
- Park off the road in a clear area away from trees.
- Face the car towards the fire.
- Stay in the car and get down below the windows, to protect you and the rest of the occupants from radiant heat.
- Turn off the engine and turn on headlights and hazard lights.
- Close windows and vents.
- Cover everyone with woollen blankets.



- Drink water.
- Cover your mouth with a damp cloth, if there is smoke.
- Stay down until the sound of the fire has passed, then carefully leave the car – remembering everything outside will be hot.

For more information go to:

<http://bit.ly/bushfiresafetyPDF>

Play it safe this summer and be very careful with any campfire, ensuring it is completely and utterly out even if you are just leaving it unattended for an hour or so. **4x4**





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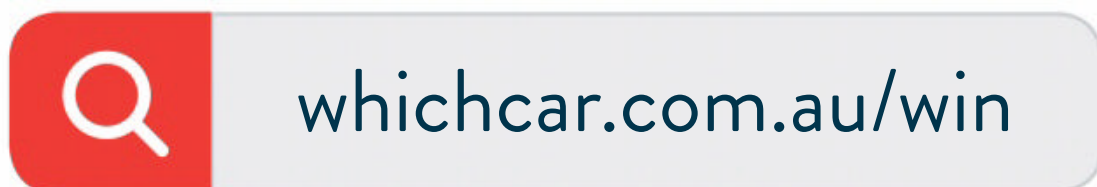


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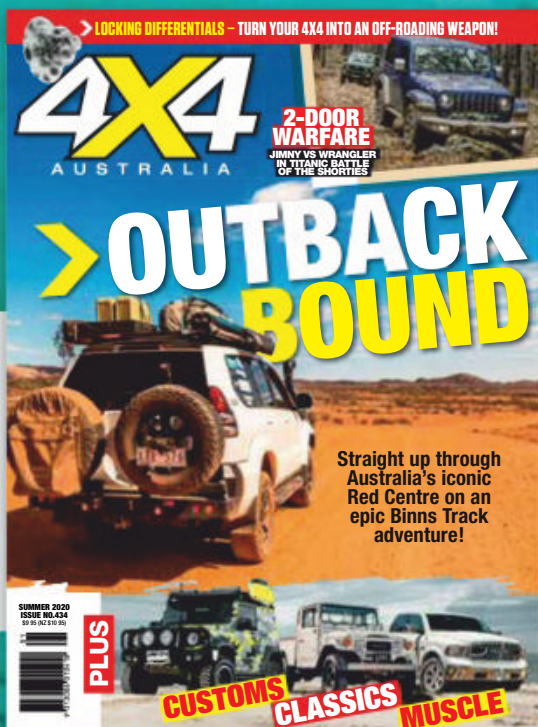
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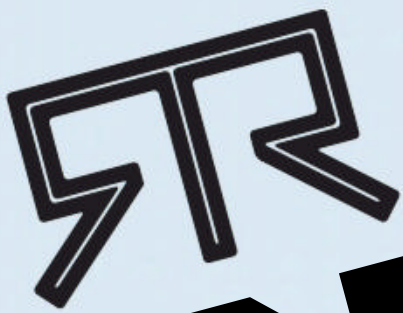
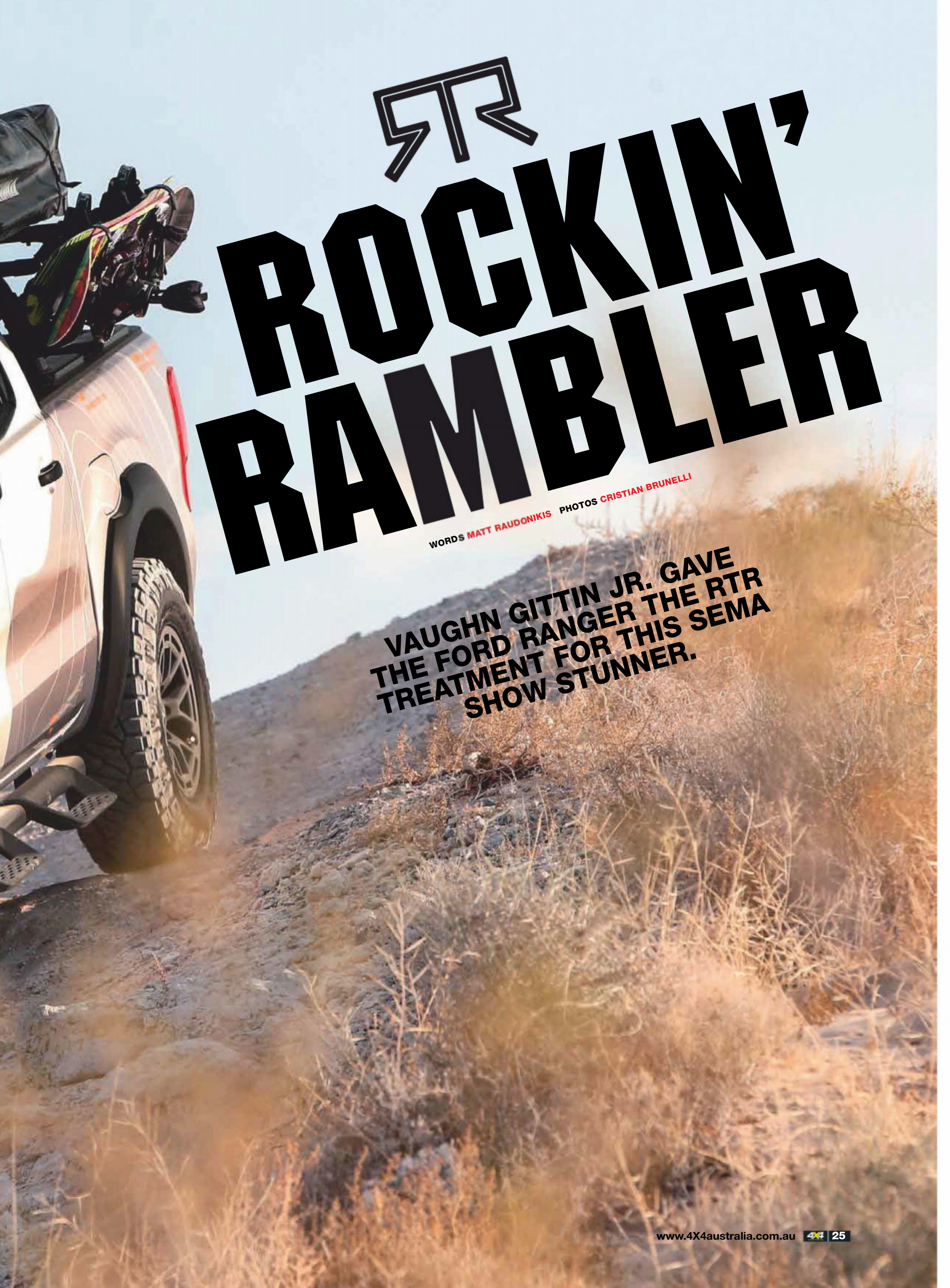
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CUSTOM

FORD RANGER RTR

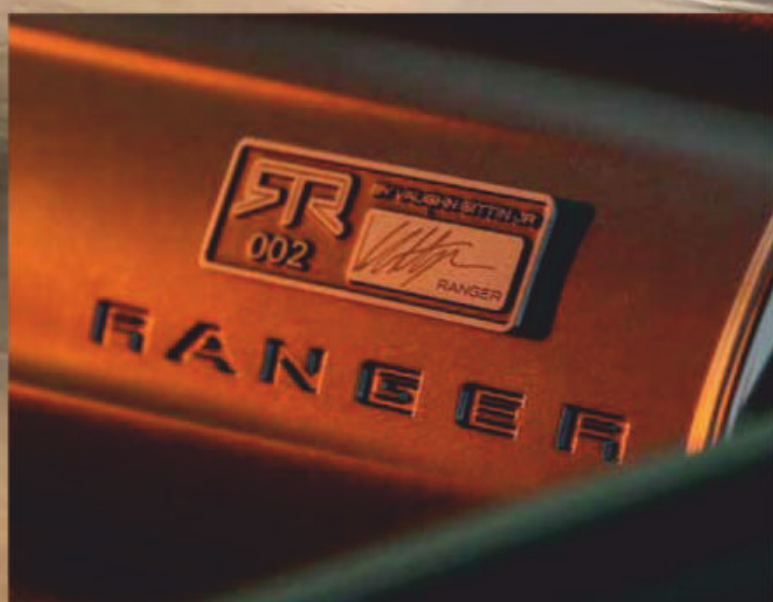




ROCKIN' RAMBLER

WORDS **MATT RAUDONIKIS** PHOTOS **CRISTIAN BRUNELLI**

**VAUGHN GITTIN JR. GAVE
THE FORD RANGER THE RTR
TREATMENT FOR THIS SEMA
SHOW STUNNER.**



**THE EXTRA KIT
STARTS WITH FOX
PERFORMANCE 2.0
COIL-OVERS UNDER
THE FRONT, FOX
SHOCKS AT THE REAR
AND RTR 17-INCH
TECH 6 ALLOYS**



01



02



THE HUGE popularity of the Ford PX Ranger both in Australia and abroad has ensured the aftermarket has jumped on board with plenty of hop-ups for the 4x4 ute. Whether it's bolt-on accessories for off-roading, cargo carrying systems, or performance and styling upgrades, there's sure to be the right products out there for your car.

Some forward-thinking companies even offer complete customised packages for the Ranger, and the better ones even have the support of the factory. Think about what HSV and FPV used to be to Holden Commodores and Ford Falcons, which HSV continues to do with its Colorado utes, and you have an idea of how far these partnerships between the vehicle manufacturer and the



aftermarket company can go.

The Ranger hasn't had the same impact in the USA since its launch there in 2019 as it had here, and it seems Ford Performance really wanted to push the midsize ute at the SEMA Show last year with half-a-dozen tricked-up versions on the main stage in Las Vegas. The show special that caught our eye was this stunning example by the guys at RTR – Ready To Rock.

RTR Vehicles is the brainchild of leading drift racer Vaughn Gittin Jr. who, after years of successfully campaigning Ford Mustangs as drift cars, saw the need for a complete style and performance package for the iconic muscle car, with the full backing of the Ford Motor Company. The first Mustang RTRs were built in 2009 and the following year RTR

01 FLARES

The shape of the LED lights in the grille is a signature to all of Gittin's Ford RTR vehicles.

02 SNOW DAY

The cargo tub has been outfitted to carry all your adventure needs, including accommodation, in the rooftop tent.



“THE GOAL WITH THE RANGER IS TO INSPIRE OUR CUSTOMERS TO STEP OUT OF THE BOUNDARIES, GET OFF THE ROAD AND DO SOME EXPLORING!”

and Ford joined forces to make these specially prepared vehicles available through select Ford dealerships in the USA with full factory support.

The next vehicle to score the RTR treatment was the ever-popular Ford F150 pick-up and, now in 2020, you can buy a Ford Ranger RTR in America. The standard Ranger RTR's extra kit starts with Fox Performance 2.0 coil-overs under the front, Fox shocks at the rear, and RTR 17-inch Tech 6 alloys wearing 265/70R17 Nitto Ridge Grappler rubber under RTR flares. A Ford Performance cat-back exhaust system is the only power upgrade to the 2.3-litre turbocharged four-cylinder petrol engine and 10-speed automatic transmission combo; the EcoBoost engine is the only option in US Rangers.

Style-wise there's the RTR grille with its signature parenthesis LED lights, RTR graphics, fender vents, floor mats and a dash plaque signed by Vaughn Gittin Jr. Consider it a Ranger Raptor Lite package, remembering that the Yanks don't get the Ranger Raptor there, yet.

“Being an off-road enthusiast and a lover of the great outdoors, I am in love with the way the Ford Ranger RTR can allow you to explore roads and lands less travelled,” said Gittin, who also competes off-road in a Bronco-based Ultra 4 racer. “The goal with the Ranger RTR is to inspire our customers to step out of the boundaries, get off the road, enjoy the outdoors and do some exploring!”



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RTR built on this package for the SEMA Show to create the Ranger RTR Rambler; a fully kitted Ranger ready to take on any adventure. Starting at the cargo tub, a Yakima bed rack mounts a rooftop tent up top with snowboard mounts on one side and traction board mounts on the other. In the tub, a BedSlide supports a Rockland single drawer with jerry cans up top and an ARB Jack on the side. There's also an ARB twin-pump air compressor mounted to the tubside. Utilising both the bed slide and roller drawer gives users easy access to what's inside.

There's more ARB goodness up front with a Ford Performance by ARB front bumper, which is another interesting collab between the OE and aftermarket. The steel bumper mounts a Warn winch, while the underbody protection and tow points come from the Ford Performance catalogue. There's an extra LED



THE RTR RAMBLER IS A FULLY KITTED RANGER THAT'S READY TO TAKE ON ANY ADVENTURE



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light bar mounted in the grille which, when combined with the octet of Rigid Industries blasters up top, provides plenty of lumens for night-time escapades.

The Rambler boosts off road performance thanks to a Harrop/Eaton E-locker fitted in the front axle, complementing the factory locker in the rear differential.

The Ranger RTR and the Rambler concept show how well vehicle manufacturers and top-level customisers can work together to create special vehicles for owners' needs. It's not a new idea but is one we are only just starting to see more of in the 4x4 sphere, and we look forward to more of it.

As for RTR, "We are constantly evaluating new markets and options that would allow us to either create unique groups of parts, or new parts all together," said Cory Justice, director of sales and marketing for RTR Vehicles. "At this time, the parts shown on the Rambler such as the limb risers, grille with the optional LED light bar, and potentially the snorkel, are in process." 

01 LIGHTEN UP

Eight Rigid Industries spotties up top turn night into day.

02 RAMBLER REAR

The small Rambler badge on the tailgate understates what's ahead of it.



**THE CONCEPT SHOWS HOW WELL
MANUFACTURERS AND TOP-LEVEL
CUSTOMISERS CAN WORK TOGETHER
TO CREATE SPECIAL VEHICLES**



A CLOSER LOOK



01 TO COME

The RTR snorkel fitted to the Rambler is a prototype that could soon become a production version.



02 BRANCH OFF

Limb-riser cables from the front 'guards to the roof rack protect the A-pillars and snorkel from low branches.



03 TYRES

The 17-inch Tech 6 alloy wheels on the RTR Rambler mount bigger 285/75R17 Nitto Ridge Grapplers.



04 LEATHER OPTION

The two-tone leather seat trim package, with RTR insignia, is optional on the Ranger RTR.



05 NO HOOK

The Warn Sidewinder is the brand's closed-loop replacement for the conventional winch hook.



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4X4
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**OF THE
YEAR**



WORDS FRASER STRONACH PHOTOS NATHAN JACOBS

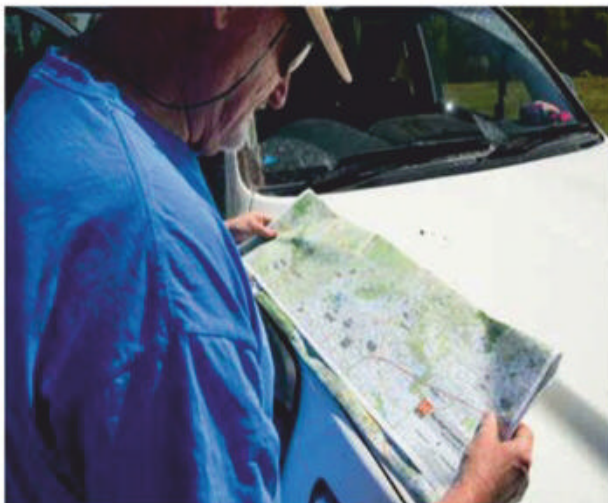
Seven very different vehicles battle it out for 4X4 Of The Year. Only one can win.




4X4

AUSTRALIA

OF THE YEAR





What you see here is an esoteric collection of 4x4s brought together by being either new or significantly mechanically revised in the last year, to determine which is the best. That's why it's called 4X4 Of The Year.

It doesn't matter that the least expensive is \$25K and the most expensive nearly five times that amount, as this is not a comparison test of the type usually conducted by *4X4 Australia*. Rather the seven shortlisted vehicles are scored against five long-established criteria (see p43) by our experienced judging panel and by secret ballot.

The seven shortlisted 'new' vehicles are the Mercedes-Benz X350d, which just missed the release date cut-off last year so may seem 'old' by now, the Ssangyong Musso XLV, the Suzuki Jimny

and the Jeep Wrangler Rubicon. The Mitsubishi Triton (new automatic gearbox), the Land Rover Discovery (new V6 diesel) and the Nissan Navara N-Trek Warrior (re-engineered chassis) fall more into the mechanically revised camp, although you could argue that the Warrior is a new model, not that it matters.

In many ways it's the year for the traditionalist with the Jimny and the Rubicon both having live axles at both ends. Given only three such 4x4s are currently available as new (the Toyota LandCruiser 70 being the other), to have two new such models in the same year is indeed a fluke.

Of the remaining five shortlisted vehicles, four also have live axles at the back and, in another victory for the traditionalists, all but one of the seven are separate chassis designs.

Engines of course are a different matter; nothing too traditional here. All but one are modern and sophisticated diesels, all with turbos,



4X4
AUSTRALIA
OF THE
YEAR



high-pressure common-rail injection and diesel particulate filters to meet the latest diesel-emission laws. Some already also have selective catalytic reduction via a urea additive (AdBlue) to meet future emission laws. All but one also have an automatic gearbox. All the seven shortlisted vehicles also have sophisticated chassis control electronics mandated by law in much the same way as the emission control systems.

The seven shortlisted vehicles originate from six different countries: Japan, Germany, South Korea, the UK, USA and, one could argue, even Australia. And, in a sign of the times, the majority are dual-cab utes.

We did intend to include a new Ram 1500 EcoDiesel, another dual-cab, but the test vehicle offer was withdrawn at the last minute due to a factory recall for a coolant leak issue.



JUDGING CRITERIA

VALUE FOR MONEY

What does the vehicle offer against what it costs? Expensive vehicles can be good value just as less expensive vehicles can be poor

BREAKING NEW GROUND

To what extent does the vehicle introduce new and effective technology?

BUILT TOUGH

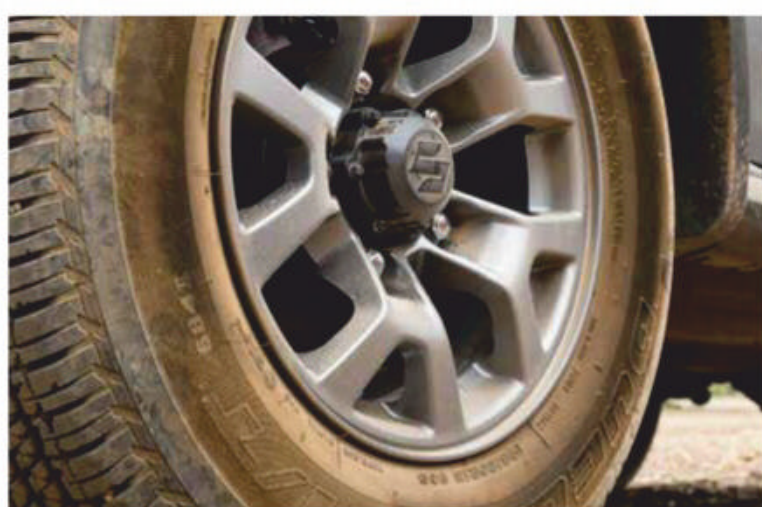
How solid and well-built is the vehicle and how will it handle tough off-road conditions?

BUSHABILITY

How practical is the vehicle off sealed roads and far away from service centres and what aftermarket gear is available for it?

DOING THE JOB

How well does the vehicle do the job it's designed to do? A family 4x4 wagon, for example, isn't designed to do the same job as a 4x4 dual-cab



THE CONTENDERS

SUZUKI JIMNY

BACKGROUND

THE SUZUKI Jimny is the gift that keeps on giving. It's back again in 4X4OTY after last appearing five years ago thanks to the introduction of electronic traction control off the back of the then-mandatory introduction of Electronic Stability Control.

That was the last iteration of the previous generation Jimny that dates back to 1998. What we have here is the latest generation Jimny that brings a new 1.5-litre four-cylinder petrol engine (replacing the previous 1.3) and is marginally heavier, wider and taller, and rides on a wider track and on skinnier tyres than the superseded model. It also has an all new but nicely retro body.

If you're starting to get the sense that there's a lot of history here you would be right, as only a rare few of today's 4X4s can trace direct ancestry back 50 years. What started in 1970 with the LJ10 and its 360cc air-cooled twin-cylinder two-stroke engine has culminated in this latest model.

Between 1970 and today much has changed but two things have remained constant, namely a separate ladder-frame chassis and live axles front and back. That puts the Jimny in the same 'old-school' club as the also shortlisted Jeep Wrangler Rubicon.

TOURING

This new model may have the biggest and most powerful engine ever to appear in a Jimny, but 75kW still isn't anything to shout about. Thankfully, that 75kW only has to deal with a vehicle weighing 1100kg, so it's like having 150kW in something like a Prado. That respectable power-to-weight ratio means that the Jimny is nippy enough off the mark and up towards highway speeds, but once there it starts to run out of puff given the engine has to fight weight as well as aerodynamic resistance.

While the engine is generally flexible in easier driving, to get the most out of it you need lots of revs and rowing along via the light-shifting manual gearbox. The relatively short overall gearing sees the engine is singing along at over 3000rpm at 110km/h in top gear. Still, the little petrol four thrives on revs and is smooth enough even if it can get a little noisy and tedious for longer highway stints. Long-distance touring is not the Jimny's forte.

The chassis feels great at lower speeds and on tighter roads where it's nippy and responsive but it doesn't like higher speeds, especially on bumpy roads where its confidence and composure fade. Its general ride quality and comfort are still pretty good though, especially for something so light.

TRAIL DRIVING

If the Jimny works better at low speeds on the road, it really comes into its own on trails, the tighter, the better. More than anything else, the Jimny's tiny size and great visibility make it

The Jimny offers a lively chassis and ride quality is impressive given the vehicle's light weight and short wheelbase.



**TWO THINGS HAVE REMAINED
CONSTANT, NAMELY A
SEPARATE LADDER-FRAME
CHASSIS AND LIVE AXLES
FRONT AND REAR**



SUZUKI JIMNY	
ENGINE	1.5-litre 4-cyl petrol
MAXIMUM POWER	75kW at 6000rpm
MAXIMUM TORQUE	130Nm at 4000rpm
GEARBOX	Five-speed manual
4X4 SYSTEM	Dual-range part-time
KERB WEIGHT	1075kg
GVM	1435kg
PAYLOAD	360kg
TOWING CAPACITY	1300kg
GCM	N/A
SEATING CAPACITY	4
FUEL TANK CAPACITY	40 litres
ADR FUEL CLAIM	6.4L/100km
TEST FUEL USE	8.3L/100km
EFFECTIVE RANGE	432km
BASE PRICE	\$23,990 (plus ORC)
AS-TESTED	\$23,990 (plus ORC)



ridiculously easy to drive around an obstacle if you can't drive over it, which you can do most of the time thanks to the very short front and rear overhangs and generous ground clearance. Its light weight also results in strong performance on soft surfaces.

On the other side of the ledger, a larger wheel/tyre package would help as the standard 195/80R15s tend to fall into holes, especially on tracks worn by larger 4x4s. The gap between first and second is also noticeably wide, even if the low-range reduction is handy enough, so you need to be attentive to engine speeds if you don't wish to lose momentum on climbs.

SET-PIECE HILL CLIMB

Our steep set-piece climb is littered with deep holes, which had the little Suzuki working hard with its small tyres. Still, the live-axle suspension gives plenty of articulation and the electronic traction control helps if and when it lifts a wheel. The Jimny got to the top of the climb and didn't have to work as hard as some of the others despite its highway-pattern tyres, and it got down easily enough thanks to its lowish first gear.

CABIN, EQUIPMENT AND SAFETY

The Jimny may be tiny on the outside but feels bigger inside even if it only seats four. Despite the lack of steering-wheel

adjustment, drivers of seemingly all shapes and sizes can get comfortable and with the rear seats down there's a surprising amount of luggage space although there are no tie-downs.

The equipment list runs to Apple CarPlay/Android Auto and while it also has forward collision warning, lane departure warning and rear cross-traffic alert, under the newer and tougher ANCAP safety assessment, the Jimny only rates three out of five stars. Tested under the ANCAP protocols of two years ago, the Jimny would have been a five-star car.

PRACTICALITIES

The Jimny's short fuel range is its practicality Achilles heel. The consumption isn't bad but the 40-litre fuel tank it doesn't take you all that far. Meanwhile, the modest 1300kg tow rating and 360kg payload aren't a surprise and perhaps even better than you would expect. Solid front and rear recovery points are a bonus but the vulnerable engine air intake would need to be addressed with a snorkel for deeper water crossings.

SUMMARY

Nowhere else do you get a seriously capable 4x4 weekend fun machine and a brilliant city runabout in one. And nowhere else can you have as much driving fun for so little money.



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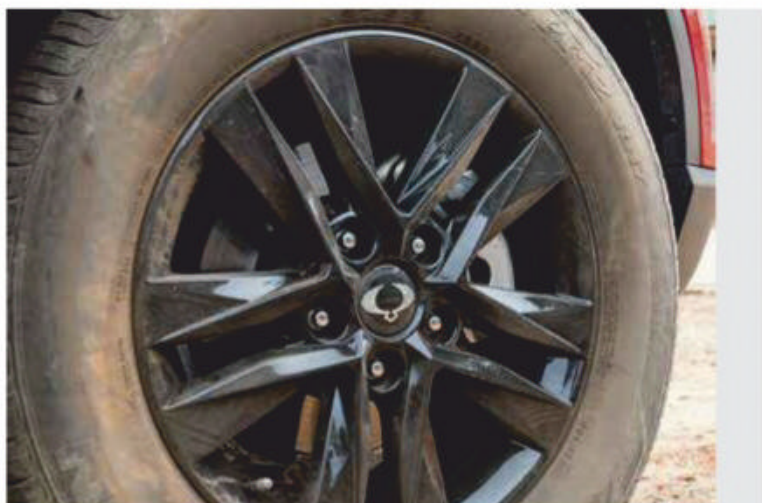
PROVEN PERFORMANCE





THE CONTENDERS

SSANGYONG MUSSO XLV ULTIMATE



BACKGROUND

SSANGYONGS have now appeared on the 4X4OTY shortlist two years in a row, if nothing else a new record. Last year it was the Rexton wagon; this year it's the Musso ute. This, however, is not a fluke but comes off the back of Ssangyong setting up a factory owned and backed distributor in Australia in 2018 after a number of years of being absent from the Australian market.

Among a number of new models, the Musso is a new-from-the-ground-up design that appeared globally in 2018. What we have here is the Musso XLV, one of two quite distinct Musso variants that has a longer wheelbase and a much longer tub than the short-tub model, which is just known as the Musso.

The XLV comes in three equipment grades. The base ELX has leaf springs at the rear and the option of a manual gearbox, the Ultimate has the option of leaf or coil springs, while the Ultimate Plus is coil only. Ultimate and Ultimate Plus only come as automatics. The vehicle tested here is a coil-spring Ultimate.

TOURING

The Musso is powered by the same impressive 2.2-litre four-cylinder turbo diesel used in the Rexton, and it claims 133kW of power and 420Nm of torque. While these numbers might sound unremarkable you can't help but be impressed by the engine's low noise levels and general running refinement. In fact, after driving the Musso, both the Triton's and the Navara Warrior's similar-sized turbo-diesel fours felt somewhat gruff and unrefined.

Performance-wise, the Musso gets along effortlessly enough with good torque available from low engine speeds without ever being notably eager when pressed hard, as you'd expect of 133kW hauling a 2200kg ute. For its part the six-speed automatic is smooth shifting but tends to hang on to the taller gears, perhaps in the interests of fuel economy. The gearbox has a 'manual' mode, via a toggle switch on the side of the shifter, which works well enough when you get used to it.

If the overwhelming impression of the Musso's engine is one of refinement above and beyond the asking price, so too does the chassis have a quality feel in terms of the ride and road-noise suppression. Even the unladed ride is good.

Meanwhile, the steering response and general handling offers little to complain about unless it's pushed at higher speeds on bumpier roads.

TRAIL DRIVING

The Musso is a big ute – bigger even than a Ford Ranger – with a huge amount of rear overhang and only a modest amount of

The chassis has a quality feel in terms of ride and road-noise suppression, and it's even comfortable when unladen.



**THE OVERWHELMING
IMPRESSION OF THE
MUSSO'S ENGINE IS ONE OF
REFINEMENT ABOVE AND
BEYOND THE ASKING PRICE**

ground clearance, so tight, gnarly trails aren't its forte. There's not much wheel travel either and the approach angle could also be better. Still, the Musso went where all the others went on test, although it did come out the other end battle-scarred with both front and rear bumpers copping some minor damage.

The Musso's part-time 4x4 system is electromechanically operated via a rotary dial and goes into and out of low range with less fuss than many other dial-operated systems, but it could do with a deeper low range. The six-speed automatic generally works well in low range too although needs 'manual' control via the shifter toggle to get the best from it.

SET-PIECE HILL CLIMB

The Musso was always going to have to work hard to get up the set-piece hill climb and so it turned out. The ramp-over clearance and long rear overhang both proved a problem, while the somewhat clunky electronic traction control struggled to rein in the amount of wheelspin being generated because of the limited wheel travel. Still, it got up even on its highway tyres but only with our set-piece hill-climb expert – editor Raudonikis – working hard at wheel and throttle.

CABIN, EQUIPMENT AND SAFETY

The Musso has a huge cabin that's as wide as an Amarok and as long as a Ranger, the two benchmarks amongst the popular dual cabs in those two respective measures. And it's nicely finished and generally well presented, leather-look seats and all, providing a quality feel that goes well above the modest asking price.

There's tilt-only steering wheel adjustment but neither the driving position nor driver's seat drew complaints while the rear seat is a genuine three-adult prospect. Kit includes smart key entry, push-button stop/start, heated and air-conditioned front seats, Apple CarPlay/Android Auto, auto headlights and wipers, daytime running lights and tyre-pressure monitoring. There's no embedded satnav however and only manual climate control.

The impressive list of high-end safety kit starts with automatic emergency braking and runs to lane-departure warning, blindspot monitoring and rear cross-traffic alert. At the time of writing the Musso hadn't undergone an ANCAP assessment.

PRACTICALITIES

The Musso's 1.6-metre tray (with a 12-volt outlet) is both wider and longer than the trays on all the popular dual cabs and has the distinction of being able to carry a full-size pallet between the wheel arches. This rear-coil-spring Musso has a decent 880kg payload but it should be noted that the leaf-spring model adds 240kg to the payload, GVM and GCM. Both variants are rated to tow 3500kg.

There are no recovery hooks however – only a front screw-in towing eye – while the engine air intake under the bonnet lip is not ideally placed for deep water crossings.

SUMMARY

A quality feel from bumper to bumper, a big cabin and tray, lots of kit and a small price tag has the Musso standing out from the dual-cab crowd, but it's no off-road weapon.



SSANGYONG MUSSO XLV ULTIMATE	
ENGINE	2.2-litre 4-cyl turbo diesel
MAXIMUM POWER	133kW at 4000rpm
MAXIMUM TORQUE	420Nm at 1400-2800rpm
GEARBOX	Six-speed auto
4X4 SYSTEM	Dual-range part-time
KERB WEIGHT	2160kg
GVM	2980kg
PAYLOAD	880kg
TOWING CAPACITY	3500kg
GCM	6130kg
SEATING CAPACITY	5
FUEL TANK CAPACITY	75 litres
ADR FUEL CLAIM	8.2L/100km
TEST FUEL USE	11.5L/100km
EFFECTIVE RANGE	602km
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The Triton's rear diff lock had to be engaged to conquer the set-piece hill climb as wheel travel is limited.

THERE'S A SPORTINESS ABOUT THE POWERTRAIN THAT'S MİRRORED IN THE TRITON'S CHASSIS WITH CRISP STEERING AND AGILE HANDLING



THE
CONTENDERS

MITSUBISHI TRITON GLS

BACKGROUND

FOUR YEARS have passed since a Triton has appeared on the shortlist for 4X4OTY. That was the all-new, fifth-generation MQ model that arrived in Australia in 2015.

What you see here is Mitsubishi's new MR Triton. It's not so much of an all-new model but more a midlife refresh of the MQ. The significant mechanical change is the adoption of a new six-speed automatic that replaces the previous five-speeder but there are also new springs and dampers at the rear to improve the load carrying, it seems, and terrain-specific modes have been added to the 4x4 system. There's also new active safety equipment and distinctive new styling just to let you know it's a new model.

In a dual-cab market that's both very crowded and very competitive, the Triton is outsold only by the Toyota Hilux and the Ford Ranger thanks largely to pricing only bettered by Chinese, Indian and now Korean utes. And while this new Triton is a little more expensive than the outgoing model it's still the least expensive of the mainstream dual cabs. What we have here is a GLS, so one down from the top-spec model but still a modest asking price of just over \$50K on the road.

TOURING

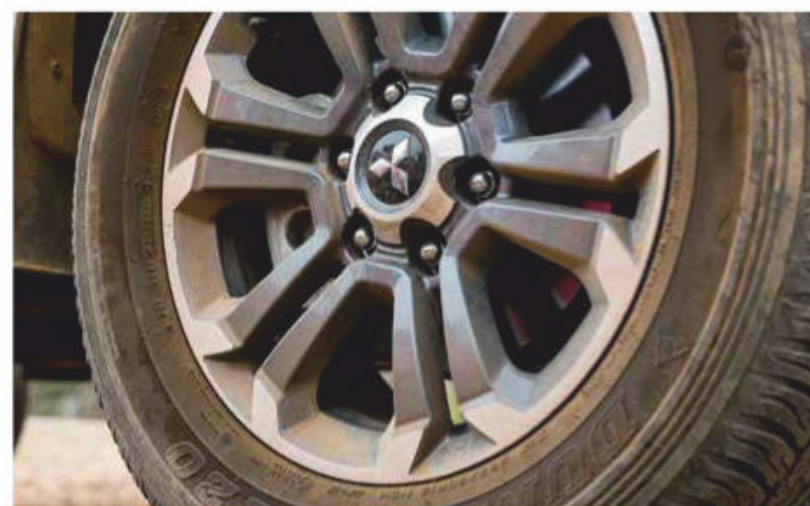
The Triton's 2.4-litre four-cylinder diesel was an all-new design when introduced in the MQ model in 2015. It's a revvy engine by contemporary diesel standards with its maximum torque not achieved until 2500rpm, a high figure given today's diesels typically achieve their maximum torque well below 2000rpm and even as low as 1400rpm in the case of some such as the Musso tested here.

The Triton's general performance is helped by its trim weight and shortish final-drive gearing and it performs a little better than the on-paper maximum power (133kW) and torque (430Nm) figures suggest even if it does rev a bit more to give its best.

The engine's still smooth running and reasonably quiet for a diesel and likewise the new six-speed automatic offers good refinement and well-sorted (i.e. not too lazy) shift protocols. The gearbox also works nicely in the 'manual' mode, which can be operated via the shift lever, or via paddle shifters behind the steering wheel.

There's a sportiness about the powertrain that's mirrored in the Triton's chassis with crisp steering and agile handling. On slippery roads, wet bitumen and the like, there's also the surefootedness of full-time 4x4, courtesy of the Triton's Super Select II transfer case that also offers a rear-wheel-drive mode.

Not so good is the firm ride and the kick that the rear suspension can give over bigger bumps, especially with little load onboard. This is the downside of improving the chassis'





MITSUBISHI TRITON GLS	
ENGINE	2.4-litre 4-cyl turbo diesel
MAXIMUM POWER	133kW at 3500rpm
MAXIMUM TORQUE	430Nm at 2500rpm
GEARBOX	Six-speed auto
4X4 SYSTEM	Dual-range full-time (+2wd)
KERB WEIGHT	1988kg
GVM	2900kg
PAYLOAD	912kg
TOWING CAPACITY	3100kg
GCM	5885kg
SEATING CAPACITY	5
FUEL TANK CAPACITY	75 litres
ADR FUEL CLAIM	8.6L/100km
TEST FUEL USE	10.9L/100km
EFFECTIVE RANGE	638km
BASE PRICE	\$47,640 (plus ORC)
AS-TESTED	\$47,650 (plus ORC)*
*DOES NOT INCLUDE TOWBAR	

load-carrying performance, which was a criticism of the previous model Triton.

TRAIL DRIVING

The Triton's firm ride is something that also makes its presence felt on rougher trails but otherwise the Triton does a reasonable job. It has a relatively short wheelbase for a dual-cab ute, which helps with general manoeuvrability, and has decent clearance and a good approach angle. Not so good is the only modest wheel travel and the long rear overhang.

This new model brings driver-selectable programmes for gravel, mud/snow and sand, which can tweak the ESC and the ETC as well as the throttle mapping and gearbox shift protocols, although locking the centre diff (by selecting 4HLC on the transfer dial) and the rear diff are both done by the driver as the 4x4 system is still mechanical.

SET-PIECE HILL CLIMB

With its modest wheel travel working against it, the Triton wouldn't get up the set-piece hill climb without engaging the rear diff lock, as the electronic traction control (ETC) is not as well sorted for off-road use as it could be. Other manufacturers have done better with specific off-road calibration of the ETC for when the vehicle is in low-range.

Engaging the Triton's rear locker actually cancels the ETC on both axles, so is not always an advantage, but it worked on the steep set-piece climb as most of the weight is on the rear axle.

CABIN, EQUIPMENT AND SAFETY

The Triton's cabin is smallish by dual-cab standards, both up front and in the rear where it's a squeeze for three adults. Up front the

driving position suits shorter rather than taller drivers best and the seat squab is closer to the floor than in other dual cabs. Tilt-and-reach steering-wheel adjustment is however a nice touch and not too common in utes.

The cabin is nicely finished but still feels a little utilitarian, perhaps because at this spec level it lacks smart-key entry and push-button start and doesn't have embedded satnav at any spec level, relying instead on smartphone navigation via Apple CarPlay/Android Auto.

But the Triton is loaded with safety kit which, even in this non-top-spec model, runs to seven airbags, automatic emergency braking, lane-departure warning, blindspot monitoring and rear cross-traffic alert.

PRACTICALITIES

There's no 12-volt outlet in the rear tub, which is disappointing given this is a recreational (not commercial) grade model and, as ever, the Triton's tub is one of the smallest among the popular dual cabs and the tie-down hooks are situated too high. The Triton also doesn't match the big utes for tow or payload ratings. But smaller can mean handier too in any confined space, and not everyone wants a big ute anyway.

The Triton only has one front recovery hook, and none at the rear, although the engine air intake is via the inner guard, which brings some security for deep water crossings.

SUMMARY

The Triton does absolutely nothing wrong, but aside from its full-time 4x4 system and generous lashings of safety kit it isn't remarkable in any way. Still, it's not expensive, so no one is complaining. Right?

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THE CONTENDERS

NISSAN NAVARA N-TREK WARRIOR



BACKGROUND

WHAT YOU see here is the new Nissan Navara N-Trek Warrior. The N-Trek Warrior is not to be confused with the bread-and-butter N-Trek, which is merely an exercise in styling. In contrast, the Warrior is an exercise in engineering, or more specifically chassis re-engineering by Premcar, the current embodiment of the Prodrive, Tickford and Ford Performance Vehicles dynasty.

The Warrior brings specially tuned springs and dampers and a bigger wheel/tyre package essentially to improve off-road performance. To this end the Warrior also sports a bespoke steel front bar, underbody protection and side rails, as well as an LED light bar, a redesigned towbar and various styling enhancements. The Warrior is built in Melbourne by Premcar yet comes with full factory backing and warranty, and standard Navara powertrains, including six-speed manual and seven-speed automatic gearboxes.

TOURING

Standard Navara powertrain means the familiar Renault-sourced 2.3-litre bi-turbo four-cylinder diesel and, in the case of our test vehicle, the equally familiar seven-speed automatic gearbox.

In typical bi-turbo style the engine combines good off-idle response with its maximum torque (450Nm) on tap at just 1500rpm with a keenness to rev as peak power (140kW) doesn't arrive until 3750rpm. This is a sprightly engine in a standard Navara and while the Warrior's extra hardware adds some 200kg, and the taller tyres raise the overall gearing by just over seven per cent, it continues to offer decent performance, aided by the fact that the standard Navara's overall gearing is quite short so the taller tyres compensate for this rather than make overall gearing too tall.

Not so good is the fact that the engine is relatively noisy and even harsh under load; it's certainly the least refined of the diesels here. For its part the seven-speed automatic shifts smoothly enough but can be reluctant to back-shift under load preferring to generally hang on to a taller gear than to reach for a shorter gear.

If all that sounds a bit lukewarm, there's nothing second-rate about the way the chassis changes work on the road despite the taller ride height and off-road-orientated tyre and wheel package.

Up front lighter springs replace the stock springs but there's an extra long, progressive bump stop, which firms up the spring rate towards full compression. At the rear, dual-rate springs continue to be employed but are softer in the initial spring but firmer in the secondary spring. The new springs are from Monroe while the standard swaybars are retained.

Steel bar, flares, orange highlights and wheel/tyre package give it the looks to match its improved performance.

**THE WARRIOR BRINGS
SPECIALLY TUNED SPRINGS
AND DAMPERS AND A BIGGER
WHEEL/TYRE PACKAGE
ESSENTIALLY TO IMPROVE
OFF-ROAD PERFORMANCE**





NISSAN NAVARA N-TREK WARRIOR	
ENGINE	2.3-litre 4-cyl bi-turbo diesel
MAXIMUM POWER	140kW at 3750rpm
MAXIMUM TORQUE	450Nm at 1500-2500rpm
GEARBOX	Seven-speed auto
4X4 SYSTEM	Dual-range part-time
KERB WEIGHT	2186kg
GVM	2910kg
PAYLOAD	724kg
TOWING CAPACITY	3500kg
GCM	5910kg
SEATING CAPACITY	5
FUEL TANK CAPACITY	80 litres
ADR FUEL CLAIM	7.0L/100km
TEST FUEL USE	11.9L/100km
EFFECTIVE RANGE	622km
BASE PRICE	\$65,490 (driveaway)
AS-TESTED	\$65,490 (driveaway)



Perhaps more important than the new springs are the more substantial Tenneco dampers ‘tuned’ by Premcar’s engineers. The ride feels firm at lower speeds but the whole package comes together beautifully the faster you go. The fact that the Warrior feels better on the road despite the extra ride height and light-truck all-terrain tyres is testament to the quality of Premcar’s work. And remember that the Navara’s chassis has been troubled from day one and Nissan itself has reworked the suspension twice since the D23 first appeared in 2015.

TRAIL DRIVING

The chassis changes have brought 40mm more lift, 25mm of that via the taller 275/70R17 Cooper Discoverer light-truck all-terrains. Both the lift and the tyres transform the off-road performance from the standard Navara’s rather modest capability to something that’s far more respectable. Ground clearance is an issue with a standard Navara, so the extra 40mm is more than welcome. As ever the raised bonnet edges are a negative in terms of off-road visibility. The rotary-dial part-time 4x4 system offers deep low-range reduction but the gearbox can be reluctant to down shift on descent even when used in the ‘manual’ tip-shift mode.

SET-PIECE HILL CLIMB

Despite the all-terrain tyres, the Warrior couldn’t make it up the set-piece hill climb relying on the traction control alone but managed the climb once the rear diff lock was engaged, and did it fairly easily. Unlike the Triton, engaging the rear locker keeps the traction active on the front wheels, which is advantageous.

CABIN, EQUIPMENT AND SAFETY

The Warrior is based on an ST-X Navara with the luxury option

pack, so is well equipped in basic form, and comes with the addition of a themed interior with bespoke part-leather seat trim and carpets. The generous equipment list extends to smart-key entry and start, electric adjust for the driver’s seat, heated front seats, embedded satnav, Apple CarPlay/Android Auto and an eight-inch touchscreen.

There’s tilt-only steering wheel adjustment, however, and some complaint from our judges that the lumbar support is too low in the driver’s seat. Otherwise the Warrior’s cabin is what you expect from a Navara-based ute; spacious but not as big as some and not really roomy enough for three adults in the back seat with any sort of long-distance comfort.

No fewer than seven airbags help to achieve a five-star ANCAP rating when the Navara was last tested, but there’s no high-end safety features such as automatic emergency braking.

PRACTICALITIES

The Warrior retains the 3500kg towing capacity of the standard Navara but the payload is reduced due to the extra hardware fitted. The GVM and GCM figures remain unchanged from the standard Navara while adjustable tie-down arrangement in tray is a nice touch.

Off-road practicalities run to one front recovery point while the engine-air intake under the bonnet lip isn’t ideal for deep water crossings, so you’d want to fit a snorkel.

SUMMARY

In the Warrior, Premcar’s engineers have achieved the seemingly impossible in creating a vehicle that is more dynamically pleasing on-road but more capable off-road. That’s a rare feat deserving of high praise.



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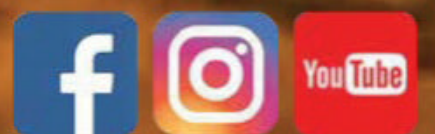
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AND COMFORTING RIDE**



The JL Wrangler Rubicon is only available as a four-door with a diesel engine and eight-speed ZF automatic.

THE CONTENDERS

JEEP WRANGLER RUBICON

BACKGROUND

The Jeep Wrangler Rubicon is the latest and ultimate embodiment of the go-anywhere spirit and core mechanical design of the original and iconic World War II Jeep. The Toyota LandCruiser, the Nissan Patrol and Land Rover all owe their existence in one way or another to the original WW2 Jeep.

The latest iteration of the Rubicon – the JL – brings a new 2.2-litre diesel and a new ZF eight-speed automatic.

The Rubicon is only available as a four-door and is distinguished from 'lesser' Wranglers by its impressive off-road arsenal that runs to front and rear lockers, deeper low-range gearing, a front swaybar disconnect and mud-terrain tyres.

TOURING

The Rubicon's diesel engine offers strong off-idle response with decent power at high engine speeds. On the road it provides fuss-free and relatively spritely performance despite the Rubicon's garden-shed aerodynamics and reasonably hefty (over 2200kg unladen) weight. This new engine is also notably quiet and smooth and is backed by a world's best-practice eight-speed ZF automatic.

The chassis is only so-so in terms of on-road dynamic sharpness, especially on bumpy roads, but this comes as no surprise given it has live axles at both ends and the steering is no doubt deliberately made vague on centre to mask the bump steer.

Still, all is not lost. The full-time 4x4 mode gives security of power delivery on slippery roads plus the convenience of a set-and-forget drive mode when road conditions alternate back and forth between sealed and gravel and/or wet and dry. And while bumpy-road dynamics aren't all that flash, the Rubicon still settles and corners well enough on smooth roads, even on its stock muddies.

TRAIL DRIVING

You'll love the Rubicon once you hit the trails. Here the long-travel live-axle suspension works a treat keeping the wheels on the ground, and providing a soft and comforting ride. And if you want it softer and more comfortable again you can decouple the front sway bar via a dashboard switch. There's no need to use the lockers unless it gets very gnarly as the off-road tuned electronic traction control does such a good job. In low range, leave the ZF auto in Drive for perfectly timed auto backshifts on descent without resorting to the paddle-shift manual mode.

It's comforting too knowing that the BF Goodrich Mud-Terrains not only provide grip but their light-truck construction and low speed-rating means they are less likely to be damaged off-road.





JEEP WRANGLER RUBICON	
ENGINE	2.2-litre 4-cyl turbo diesel
MAXIMUM POWER	147kW at 3500rpm
MAXIMUM TORQUE	450Nm at 2000rpm
GEARBOX	Eight-speed auto
4X4 SYSTEM	Dual-range full-time (+ 2wd)
KERB WEIGHT	2221kg
GVM	2630kg
PAYLOAD	409kg
TOWING CAPACITY	2495kg
GCM	4876kg
SEATING CAPACITY	5
FUEL TANK CAPACITY	81 litres
ADR FUEL CLAIM	7.5L/100km
TEST FUEL USE	12.2L/100km
EFFECTIVE RANGE	658km
BASE PRICE	\$68,950 (plus ORC)
AS-TESTED	\$73,275 (plus ORC)

SET-PIECE HILL CLIMB

The Rubicon scaled the set-piece hill climb without lockers engaged or front swaybar decoupled thanks to the generous wheel travel and the electronic traction control. With lockers in and front swaybar decoupled, it proved totally effortless. Engine braking in descents is superb but ramp-over clearance could be better, due in part to the long wheelbase.

CABIN, EQUIPMENT AND SAFETY

The Rubicon's cabin has a premium feel even if all the leather, as well as the heated seats and steering wheel, are part of an options pack that adds \$4325. We nicknamed the Rubicon the "Reverse Tardis" as it feels small on the inside, and is, but more noticeably in the rear seat and luggage area rather than up front where the driver's cramped footwell is the only annoyance.

Tilt and reach steering adjustment and comfortable front seats are positives, as is the radar cruise control that can be readily switched to manual mode, the big touchscreen, and embedded satnav with its notably good off-road mapping.

The Rubicon also comes with plenty of high-end safety kit including automatic emergency braking, blindspot monitoring and rear cross-traffic alert, but rates three out of five stars under the new and tougher ANCAP safety test protocols.

PRACTICALITIES

The Rubicon can't tow or carry big loads like other 4x4 wagons but it does have a unique side of its personality that other 4x4s can't match. You can take the roof off and the Rubicon becomes an instant 'beach buggy', or even an on-road convertible, if you wish to think of it in that way. And while removing the whole roof takes a bit of effort and a couple of people, the two large roof panels above the driver and passenger can be easily removed to create a part open-air driving experience.

It should also be noted that Australian Rubicons come with smaller tyres than US-model Rubicons (255/75R17 versus 285/70R17) due to the full-time 4x4 drive system using lighter duty axles than the US model's part-time 4x4 system, which may compromise fitting a larger wheel/tyre package.

You would expect nothing less but the Rubicon comes with solid front and rear recoveries while the air-intake is mounted high, up against the underside of the bonnet.

SUMMARY

The Jeep Wrangler Rubicon is still the ultimate showroom stock 4x4 when it comes to getting seriously dirty, but it's now more endearing and liveable thanks to its new diesel engine and full-time 4x4 system.

A black and white photograph showing the rear of a vehicle equipped with a heavy-duty towbar. The towbar has a 'TAG TOWBAR' license plate. A trailer is hitched to the towbar using a heavy chain. The background shows a grassy field and trees.

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THE CONTENDERS

MERCEDES BENZ X350D POWER



BACKGROUND

The Mercedes-Benz X-Class ute started life as a Nissan Navara. If that seems odd you need to understand that Mercedes wished to capitalise on the booming global ute market and turned to strategic partner Renault-Nissan for its Navara D23 so as to fast-track a design. Perhaps not everyone within the vast Mercedes-Benz organisation thought that was a better idea than building a clean-sheet-design ute, but either way expediency won the day.

The X-Class is however far from a rebadged Navara.

Strengthening the ladder frame, reworking the suspension, increasing the track, widening the body and adding a whole new interior is just the start of the detailed re-engineering that Mercedes applied to Navara to create the X-Class. And that's just the four-cylinder model, which appeared in last year's 4X4OTY.

In the case of the X350d you see here, Mercedes also threw out the Navara's entire four-cylinder drivetrain and slotted in its own 3.0-litre V6 diesel, seven-speed automatic and full-time dual-range 4x4 system to complete what is a top-to-bottom transformation.

TOURING

The X-Class's 3.0-litre V6 diesel claims an impressive 190kW and lives up to that power promise with plenty of top-end zip, all helped with the relatively close ratios of the seven-speed automatic and not overly tall final-drive gearing. It has a strong midrange too but the X350d still feels a little soft off idle and at low speeds, a feeling exacerbated by the heavy, long-travel throttle. The gearbox also doesn't have a 'sport' mode to help overcome – or at least mask – the slightly doughy bottom-end power delivery, but there are steering wheel-mounted paddles if you wish to use the gearbox's 'manual' mode. For less urgent driving the engine remains effortless, smooth, quiet and refined, as you would expect of something wearing a Mercedes badge.

On the road, the chassis also feels solid and substantial and gives a sense of refinement far removed from the Nissan Navara. If the Navara feels like a whole lot of bits and pieces bolted together, then the X-Class feels like it's been carved out of a solid block of metal.

On most roads and at most speeds the suspension also provides a comfortable ride despite the relatively low-profile tyres. There's good control too, although things head south at higher speeds on bumpier roads where the X350d starts to lose its otherwise good composure. Full-time 4x4 via the '4H Auto' setting in the transfer case is however a notable advantage for touring in mixed conditions and brings both safety and convenience that part-time 4x4 can't provide.



The M-B X350d performs well enough off-road but has limited wheel travel and road-biased low-profile rubber.

**IN THE X350D, MERCEDES
THREW OUT THE NAVARA'S
ENTIRE FOUR-CYLINDER
DRIVETRAIN AND SLOTTED
IN ITS OWN 3.0-LITRE V6
DIESEL, SEVEN-SPEED AUTO
AND FULL-TIME 4X4 SYSTEM**



MERCEDES BENZ X350D POWER	
ENGINE	3-litre V6 turbo diesel
MAXIMUM POWER	190kW at 3400rpm
MAXIMUM TORQUE	550Nm at 1400-3200rpm
GEARBOX	Seven-speed auto
4X4 SYSTEM	Dual-range full-time
KERB WEIGHT	2190kg
GVM	3250kg
PAYLOAD	1060kg
TOWING CAPACITY	3500kg
GCM	6180kg
SEATING CAPACITY	5
FUEL TANK CAPACITY	80 litres
ADR FUEL CLAIM	8.8L/100km
TEST FUEL USE	12.5L/100km
EFFECTIVE RANGE	590km
BASE PRICE	\$79,415 (plus ORC)
AS-TESTED	\$90,745 (plus ORC)



TRAIL DRIVING

Going on its standard tyres – high-performance 255/55R19s – you would expect the X350d to be the least capable trail vehicle in this lot. More to the point you would expect low-profile tyres to not stand a chance of survival on some of the rocky trails we traversed, but luck was on our side and perhaps helped by the not-too-extreme ‘H’ (210km/h) speed rating, given higher speed ratings bring thinner and more vulnerable sidewalls.

Tyre concerns aside, the X350d works well enough off road without being a standout performer either from the way the gearbox works in low range – the paddle shifters help – or in terms of the modest ground clearance. The suspension also bangs and crashes on rougher trails, the ride quality obviously not helped by the low-profile tyres.

SET-PIECE HILL CLIMB

There were lots of wheel lifting on our gnarly set-piece hill climb from a platform not noted for long wheel travel and despite the best efforts of the seamless electronic traction control, the X350d wouldn’t get up the hill without engaging the rear locker. In fact it stopped short of any of the other six contenders although much of that blame can be directed towards the road-oriented closed-tread tyres. The side-steps also took a beating on the climb...

CABIN, EQUIPMENT AND SAFETY

The X350d is beautifully finished and detailed inside and, Land Rover Discovery aside, feels several levels above the rest here in general presentation. Still – for the price – it should and some of the equipment in our test vehicle, like the heated leather seats,

are optional, and not standard equipment.

For their part the front seats are very comfortable but like the Navara there’s still no reach adjustment for the steering wheel. Lack of stowage for items such as phones and wallets is also annoying and, while the equipment list is extensive, there’s no Apple CarPlay/Android Auto. The single stalk for the wipers and indicators takes some getting used to, as does the interface for the embedded satnav and entertainment systems.

The extensive list of safety equipment includes automatic emergency braking, lane-keeping assist and no fewer than seven airbags, all of which help the X350d achieve a five-star ANCAP rating. Tyre pressure monitoring is also a nice touch especially given the potentially damage-prone low-profile tyres.

PRACTICALITIES

The X350d has high payload and tow ratings thanks to GVM (3250kg) and GCM (6180kg) figures that better the popular utes like the Ford Ranger. In practice, however, we have previously found that the Merc’s chassis isn’t great at carrying or towing heavy loads, even if the punchy V6 is up to the task. A work light above the rear tub and adjustable tie-down points are both welcome touches.

The X350d has a solid front recovery point but none at the rear, while the engine air-intake at mid-grille height means water crossings need to be approached with caution.

SUMMARY

The X350d feels solid, presents beautifully and goes hard but doesn’t come across as value at \$90K.

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The Discovery combines superb on-road finesse with serious off-road capability.

CLAIMING A MUSCULAR 225KW AND 700NM, A DECENT HIKE UP FROM THE 190KW/600NM OF THE TD6 IT REPLACES, THE SD6 GETS THERE BY GAINING A SECOND TURBO



THE
CONTENDERS

LAND ROVER DISCOVERY SD6

BACKGROUND

Two years ago, Land Rover's all-new Discovery won 4X4OTY powered by a 2.0-litre four-cylinder bi-turbo diesel, the Sd4. Among the finalists that year was another variant in the new Discovery range powered by a 3.0-litre V6 turbo diesel, the Td6, which finished midfield, penalised by costing more but not really giving a lot more than the Sd4.

That V6 engine, along with a single-turbo four-cylinder, has been dropped from the Discovery range and replaced by a more powerful, but still 3.0-litre V6 diesel, the Sd6. Claiming a muscular 225kW and 700Nm, a decent hike up from the 190kW/600Nm of the Td6 it replaces, the Sd6 gets there by gaining a second turbo.

Otherwise this Discovery is largely unchanged, which means a cavernous eight-seat body, height-adjustable fully-independent suspension, dual-range full-time 4x4 and an eight-speed automatic ZF gearbox. And all in a notably light package thanks to a mostly aluminium monocoque construction tailored from the then all-new Range Rover platform that arrived here in 2013.

TOURING

The Sd6 uses Land Rover's unique sequential-parallel bi-turbo arrangement where a medium-sized variable geometry turbo does most of the work most of the time, and by itself. Under wider throttle openings and at higher engine speeds, however, a secondary fixed-geometry turbo joins the party to help feed the engine. The end result is seamless response right from idle, the linear power delivery providing acceleration that's quicker than it feels. It's not quite rip and tear but in this company, Mercedes-Benz X350d included, it's on another level when it comes to performance. All the while the engine is quiet, smooth and civilised while the ZF eight-speed also does everything you want and nothing you don't want.

The powertrain's five-star performance is matched by a chassis that offers a plush ride, despite the 20-inch wheels, combined with flat handling, two usually mutually exclusive attributes. And high speeds on bumpy roads don't faze the Discovery either thanks to its long-travel, fully independent suspension. The suspension also automatically lowers at higher road speeds, which gives the Discovery another string to its dynamic bow. There's excellent feel too from its electric steering despite the test vehicle wearing Land Rover's off-road tyre option for the Discovery – Goodyear Wrangler Duratracs, an all-terrain-style tyre in the factory 255/55R20 size. These aren't an LT tyre, but the relatively low-speed rating (160km/h) means far sturdier construction than the standard 270km/h-rated tyres.





TRAIL DRIVING

With properly robust tyres the Discovery can revel in its clever off-road technology. Pumped up on its air suspension it has far more clearance than any vehicle here, Rubicon included, while the suspension's long-travel combined with the automatic proportioning 4x4 system, deep low-range gearing and superb automatic gearbox make any and all off-road driving a breeze.

Not so good is the fact that when it's jacked up to its highest setting the air suspension can bang and crash as it tops out, and the general trail-driving visibility is not as good as previous Discovery models as you sit farther back and lower down than you did in either the Discovery 3/4, let alone Discovery 1/2.

SET-PIECE HILL CLIMB

Our test Discovery wasn't fitted with the optional rear locker (automatic, not driver switched) but still managed the set-piece hill climb without fuss, even with the Terrain Response program set to the default 'Road' programme. It was even better on the 'Mud and Ruts' programme but less so in 'Rock Crawl', perhaps because that locks the centre diff, whereas the other programmes mentioned allow the centre diff to proportion the drive mostly to the rear, which is where you want it on a steep climb. Previous experience suggests the optional rear locker is a dead-set bargain at \$1110 as it takes the Discovery to a whole new level off road.

CABIN, EQUIPMENT AND SAFETY

The Discovery's cabin is beautifully finished and detailed,

combining luxury with a high-tech feel. The driver and front passenger have space aplenty and 'armchair' seats, the rear seat can take three adults while even the third-row will accommodate full-size adults. There's excellent luggage space too. Negatives? The rotary-dial gear shift doesn't feel right and the cabin isn't as airy and open feeling as that of the earlier Discovery 3 and 4 models.

Automatic emergency braking leads a full suite of advanced safety features and not surprisingly, the Discovery has a five-star ANCAP rating.

PRACTICALITIES

The Discovery may not look like a rugged 4x4 wagon but its substantial GVM figure (3050kg) and even more substantial GCM figure (6650kg) provide a payload rating (827kg) that would do justice to a ute, and a tow rating as good as any ute or 4x4 wagon.

This approach is reflected in the very substantial front and rear recovery points. The rear is integrated with the inbuilt factory towbar, while the equally solid front recovery point is under a clip-off panel that's probably best removed before any serious off-road adventure. Meanwhile the engine air-intake location in the inner guard, plus the ability to jack up the suspension, gives a very reassuring 900mm wading depth.

SUMMARY

The Discovery offers an incredibly broad spectrum of performance with superb on-road finesse combined with serious off-road ability. But it's complex and expensive.

LAND ROVER DISCOVERY SD6	
ENGINE	3-litre V6 bi-turbo diesel
MAXIMUM POWER	225kW at 3750rpm
MAXIMUM TORQUE	700Nm at 1500-1750rpm
GEARBOX	Eight-speed auto
4X4 SYSTEM	Dual-range full-time
KERB WEIGHT	2223kg
GVM	3050kg
PAYLOAD	827kg
TOWING CAPACITY	3500kg
GCM	6650kg
SEATING CAPACITY	7
FUEL TANK CAPACITY	85 litres
ADR FUEL CLAIM	7.7L/100km
TEST FUEL USE	12.0L/100km
EFFECTIVE RANGE	658km
BASE PRICE	\$98,778 (plus ORC)
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THE ROUTE

AS WITH ANY BUSH TRIP THE WORST PART IS GETTING OUT OF THE CITY ... AND SO IT WAS WITH THE 4X4 OF THE YEAR CREW.



As has been the case for many previous 4X4 Of The Year events, Day 1 of testing takes place at the Melbourne 4x4 Training and Proving Ground (melbourne4x4.com.au) at Werribee, Victoria, where a range of set tracks and obstacles prove to be a great leveller.

The more dedicated 4x4s have the edge here with less scrambling on the hills and exuding more aplomb through the articulation exercises.

The Werribee River was only flowing at a low level so, like most of the river crossings around at present, it was just a splash and well within the capability of all the vehicles on test.

Next we braved peak-hour traffic as we skirted outer Melbourne and headed to Healesville and Marysville, finally finding some gravel roads as we headed through rich forest to Cumberland Junction and over the top of the Great Dividing Range at Matlock. It was bitterly cold with wind-blasted rain as we huddled in a shelter on the crest of the range for lunch.

We headed to Woods Point and then took Johnson Hill Track to cross Gooley Creek (some good camping there) and climbed up to meet the Aberfeldy Road on the top of Johnson Hill.

Dropping off the ridge we wandered down a steep track, bounced through a creek and clambered up some scrabbly rocky steps where the Musso needed just a little extra care to get through without any body damage.

Perched on a knoll, just above the confluence of the Aberfeldy River and Donnelly Creek, we came to Junction Hut where we threw down swags inside the confines of the hut or outside on the partially sheltered verandas.

The following day dawned with a blue sky and the promise of better weather. We waded across the shallow Aberfeldy River and climbed the hill to the Donnelly Creek track junction. The track almost immediately drops to the first crossing of the creek itself, then runs parallel to the creek, crossing it on a few occasions before reaching Store Point. Here



we swapped vehicles, as we do each and every hour or so on these extended multi-vehicle tests.

We then climbed the hills through a couple of tight switchbacks to the top of the range and Springs Road. While all the contenders handled the conditions pretty easily, the Jeep and Disco were leading the pack by this stage.

We turned onto Black Range Track and descended through ever-changing bands of vegetation that offered glimpses of views across to Gable End and Mt Wellington which, at 1634m, is one of the highest peaks in the area. We turned onto the Cheynes Bridge Track and that brought us out onto the black top of the Licola Road near the crossing of the beautiful Macalister River.

We pulled into the hamlet of Licola (licola.org.au) for fuel and lunch then headed up the main road, losing the bitumen as we crossed the last bridge over the Macalister River and began the long, winding and corner-corrugated climb to Arbuckle

Junction. Taking the well-maintained Moroka Road eastwards, we pulled up at Horseyard Hut for the night.

As we clambered out of ice-covered swags to welcome the new day, the campfire was the favoured spot to begin the morning's proceedings. Starting on Marathon Road we turned onto the Castle Hill Track before veering onto the lesser-used McDonald Gap Track for the long, steep and rough descent to the main Dargo Road.

Our lunch stop was in Dargo before we headed out on Jones Road and then took the Birregun Road where we stopped at the crest of Mt Birregun. From here we headed along Upper Livingstone Road into Omeo before our overnight camp in the Victoria Falls Historic Area.

The next morning we cruised across the top of Mt Hotham and down the long winding road to Bright where we refuelled. Dusty and a little weather worn, we all turned our respective ways for home, some to Melbourne and others up to Sydney.

THE SCORECARDS

ALL SEVEN vehicles completed the week-long on- and off-road test without any mechanical problems, the Ssangyong's front and rear bumper being the only casualties. There was no tyre damage either, which is somewhat of a miracle given the showroom tyres fitted to the Ssangyong Musso and more so to the Mercedes-Benz X350d.

ONCE THE DUST SETTLED AND THE JUDGES TALLIED UP THEIR SCORES, THIS IS HOW THE SEVEN SHORTLISTED VEHICLES FARED.



7TH PLACE MERCEDES-BENZ X350D

This is Mercedes-Benz's best shot at making a decent ute out of Nissan's lukewarm D23 Navara, but a ground-up Mercedes-Benz design would surely be better. Judge Ged Bulmer summed it up best when he said: "X-Class finally gets the engine it deserves, but even the muscular turbo-diesel V6 and strong



6TH PLACE MITSUBISHI TRITON

This is a ute that does nothing wrong but nothing too brilliantly either, although it does offer the convenience and safety of full-time 4x4, something that most utes don't do. If you're not after a boofy, heavy-duty dual-cab, the Triton offers much given its near bargain-basement pricing.





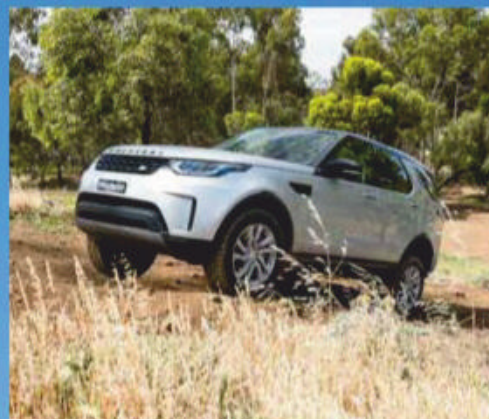
5TH PLACE SSANGYONG MUSSO XLV

Odd-looking dual-cab it may be with its plus-size tray, but the Musso is the most impressive vehicle here in terms of performing above and beyond expectations. Ron Moon, the most critical and hard-to-please of all our judges said of the Musso: "So surprisingly good I could easily live with this large dual-cab".



4TH PLACE NISSAN NAVARA N-TREK WARRIOR

The name might be a mouthful but the end result is very tasty. This locally engineered take on the Navara looks good and works even better. As judge and editor Matt Raudonikis said: "Premcar has done a stellar job on the Navara. Nissan had three stabs at getting the suspension right but it took Premcar to do the job".



3RD PLACE LAND ROVER DISCOVERY SD6

Judge Dean Mellor summed up the Discovery Sd6 when he said: "There's no doubt that with its new bi-turbo-diesel-V6 engine the Discovery is one of the best performing on- and off-road 4x4 wagons money can buy ... but at \$100K you'll need a lot of it to get behind the wheel".



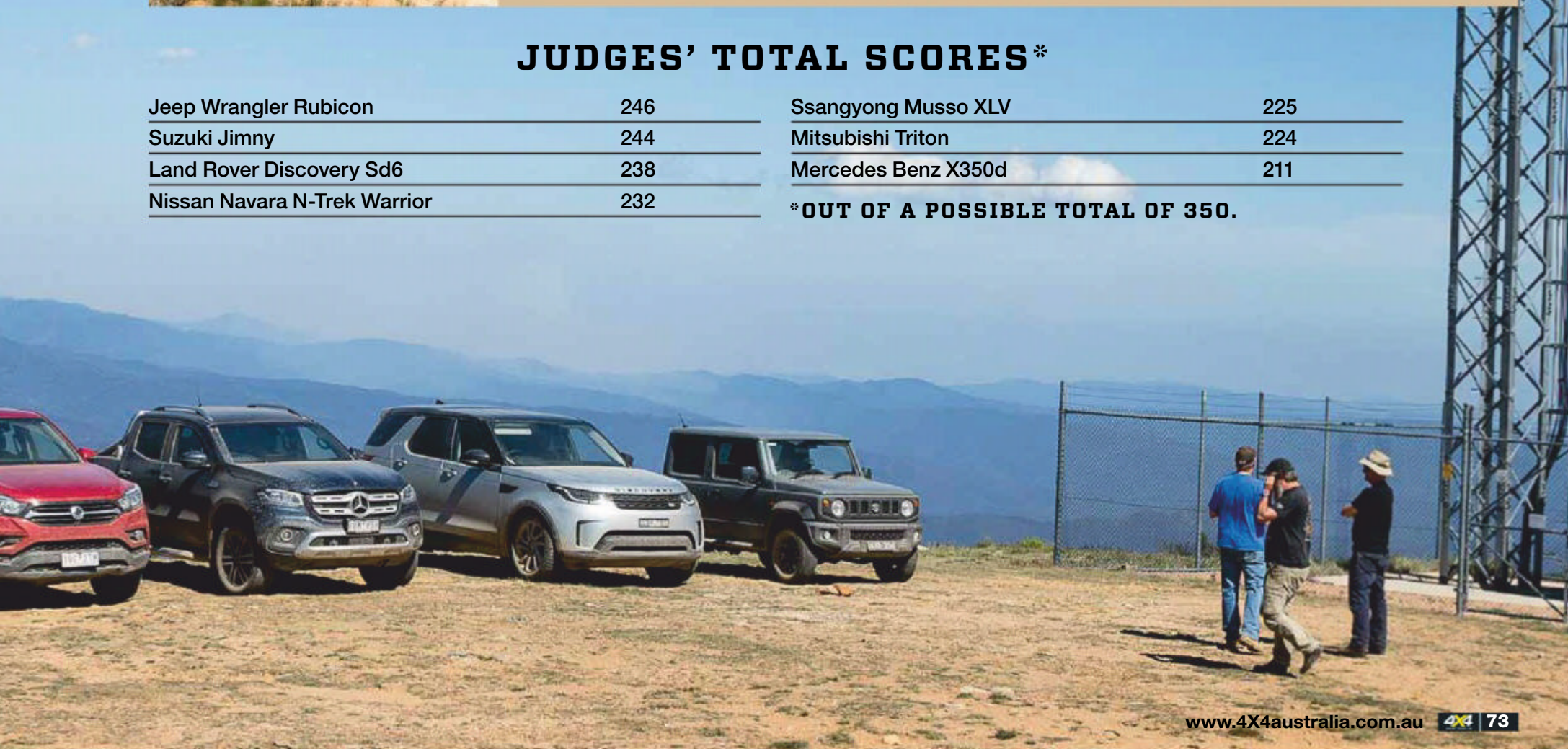
2ND PLACE SUZUKI JIMNY

The Suzuki Jimny might not be the 4x4 you want for a long highway drive but that's about the only place you won't be happy driving it. Judge Dave Morley hit it on the head when he said: "I love the way this thing brings four-wheel-driving back to reality price-wise. Good fun, and more capable than I imagined".

JUDGES' TOTAL SCORES*

Jeep Wrangler Rubicon	246	Ssangyong Musso XLV	225
Suzuki Jimny	244	Mitsubishi Triton	224
Land Rover Discovery Sd6	238	Mercedes Benz X350d	211
Nissan Navara N-Trek Warrior	232		

*OUT OF A POSSIBLE TOTAL OF 350.






THE WINNER



JEEP WRANGLER RUBICON

It's more than fitting that the Jeep Wrangler Rubicon climbs to the top level of the podium here and not just for what it does. It's what the Rubicon represents in terms of 4x4 history and its impeccable bloodline back to where the 4x4 world as we know it today all begun. Hats off to Jeep for sticking to the basic 4x4 design principles of a separate chassis and front and rear live-axle suspension when other 4x4 manufacturers have turned their back on this old-school approach, which is still the best way to build a serious 4x4. 





BIGGER, BETTER BISON

WORDS MATT RAUDONIKIS PHOTOS CRISTIAN BRUNELLI

AEV TAKES THE ZR2 BISON TO THE NEXT LEVEL, WITH THE 350 PACKAGE.







1. AEV's Highmark flares were developed to cover the 35.
2. Intake snorkel by AEV, with four-inch inlet.



THE AEV350 PACKAGE MAKES A GOOD THING BETTER, GIVING THE COLORADO MUCH-NEEDED GROUND CLEARANCE AND THE RUBBER YOU WANT FOR RUGGED OFF-ROAD USE

A

AMERICAN Expedition Vehicles (AEV) is best known for its work with Jeep and Ram vehicles from the FCA stable. For more than 20 years the skilled team at AEV has been turning these 4x4 vehicles into off-road weapons, but unlike trucks from many custom shops and modifiers the AEV rigs are built with an OEM attention to detail, product integration and quality. This comes after years of working closely with Jeep on other vehicles including show specials.

In more recent times, the AEV badge has been seen on the Chevrolet Colorado ZR2 midsize pick-up. The ZR2 is the high-performance version of the US-Colorado and it comes with off-road-focused suspension and a bolder look. As is its way, AEV has taken the ZR2 to the next level with a factory-backed collaboration to create the ZR2 Bison.

The AEV ZR2 Bison debuted at the SEMA Show in 2018 and went on sale at Chevy dealers in the USA throughout

2019. Also at SEMA that year was a ZR2 Bison concept that featured a swag of off-road extras to really make the product stand out. In the year since then, AEV's founder and president Dave Harriton and the team have developed those Bison extras to make them available as options on the vehicle, and for SEMA 2019 they displayed this stunning example bearing the full kit, now called the AEV350.

What makes the ZR2 Colorado more than just another styling exercise is its DSSV Multimatic suspension. These clever shocks come from the Chevrolet Performance team and give the truck a best-of-both-worlds suspension tune that delivers firm and stable on-road dynamics while it eats up bumps and ruts in the rough stuff. It might sound too good to be true, but we've driven a stock ZR2 and the shocks work unbelievably well.

What wasn't too good on the standard ZR2 was the relatively small tyre and wheel package fitted by Chevy, with the 31-inch all-terrain rubber getting lost under the lifted wheel arches and struggling when the going got tough. Even the ZR2 Bison only rides on 31s, albeit on AEV wheels, but the deal gets real with the AEV350 hop-up kit that squeezes 35s beneath the bespoke flares.

3. DSSV dampers were bred for motorsport.
4. Stock Chevy interior, with AEV trim.
5. Low-tube bumper holds lights and winch.

03



04



05



1. AEV Bison retains the trick ZR2 DSSV dampeners.
2. Finding a spot for the 35-inch spare proved tricky.
3. AEV switch panel for the auxilliary lights is a neat touch.
4. The venerable 135kW/500Nm Duramax 2.8-litre diesel.



Significantly, the new, American-made AEV Highmark wheel-arch flares allow those 35-inch BFGs to fit under there without any suspension lift over and above the ZR2's factory 50mm lift (over a stock Colorado). The front-end is assisted by a GM Performance levelling kit with high-angle ball joints and a GMP tie rod reinforcement kit, to maintain suspension geometry and strength with the bigger tyres fitted. The extra ground clearance offered by the 35s transforms the Colorado to give it the off-road capability it deserves; crawling over rocks, cresting dunes and negotiating ruts with ease.

Should the Colorado run out of ground clearance, the underbody of the Bison is protected by AEV's exclusive hot-stamped boron steel (HSBS) skid plates. HSBS is stronger than regular steel and the plates are available to protect under the engine, transmission, transfer case, fuel tank and rear differential. The Bison's off-road performance is bolstered by the ZR2's factory differential locks both front and rear ... to think we can't even get a factory diff lock in the rear of a Holden Colorado!

To compensate for the larger rolling diameter of the 35-inch wheels, the final-drive ratio in the diffs has been shortened to 4.11:1. This Bison is powered by the Duramax 2.8-litre diesel engine we are familiar with in Australia, and it gets the Americans excited because it's the only diesel engine offered in this class of truck there. The sound, feel and the performance of the engine is all very familiar to us, and none of those 500Nm are lost to the bigger tyres.



One of the things we love about driving AEV trucks is that, not only do they perform well off road, they drive just like an OE-stock vehicle on the highway. Most AEV vehicles run Bilstein shocks, so they ride better than stock. The AEV350 retains the DSSV dampers and features none of the pitching and wallowing that many lifted vehicles exhibit, and there are no unusual noises coming from underneath; just comfortable highway cruising, with the BFGs humming beneath. This comes from AEV's philosophy of using the minimum lift possible and keeping the suspension geometry as close to OE as possible. Even on some of the company's bigger Jeep and Ram rigs that roll on 37- and 40-inch tyres, the trucks still ride and steer as good as factory ... and in most cases, better.

The wheels on the SEMA '19 Bison are AEV's Crestone DualSport alloys that can be used with or without a beadlock.



AEV's RAM 2500 Prospector and Gladiator, wearing matching ZC Green livery.

GLADIATOR GOOD GEAR

WHEN we went out to play in the desert with the AEV Colorado, the team had all its SEMA Show vehicles with them including the RAM 2500 Prospector, JL Wrangler and the new Gladiator; all of them resplendent in custom ZC Green.

The good news for Australians is that most of the AEV kit for the Jeeps and Ram will fit our vehicles and is available through AEV dealers here. Of particular interest was the AEV-equipped Gladiator fitted with AEV front and rear bumpers, AEV Wheels, suspension and snorkel; and most of this kit is ready to go.

If you're looking for some of the best gear available to outfit your new JT Gladiator, then the AEV products are worth a look.

colour which Dave calls AEV ZC Green. All the AEV vehicles at the SEMA Show were painted in this custom colour.

The AEV350 package on the ZR2 certainly makes a good thing better, giving the Colorado much-needed ground clearance and the rubber you want for rugged off-road use. All the parts work together, fit better than OE and are well integrated into a total package.

The only real problem with the AEV kit is that little if any of it will fit on your Holden Colorado. That's right, the US-built Chevrolet Colorado is a different car to our Thai-built Holden and it rides on a different platform altogether, so AEV is just teasing us Aussies with all this good gear. We can only hope the next-gen Colorado will be built on a new global GM platform, as has been rumoured, and parts will be interchangeable on both sides of the Pacific. **4x4**

AEV took its range of 2019 SEMA Show cars for a dance in the desert, including the new Gladiator.



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BATTLE READY

WORDS MATT RAUDONIKIS

**AS THE GLADIATOR CREEPS
CLOSER, WE DRIVE JEEP'S NEW
PICK-UP TRUCK IN THE WILDS OF
NEW ZEALAND.**



**THE MOPAR-EQUIPPED GLADIATOR
CRAWLED ACROSS ROCKY RIVERS
WITHOUT TOUCHING DOWN, WHILE
THE STOCK-HEIGHT MODELS
BUMPED AND SCRAPED THROUGH**

With a wading depth of 762mm, these creek crossings posed no challenge.

A longer wheelbase than the Wrangler makes it more surefooted on tarmac.





EEP'S new Gladiator pick-up lands in Australian dealers midyear, but to give us a taste of what is to come Jeep shipped a handful of the muscular trucks to New Zealand's South Island to see how they drive. While we did get a quick blast in a Gladiator Rubicon in the Nevada desert

last month, it was great to spend a few more days with this much-anticipated model in extremely different terrain.

While the day in the desert was dry and sandy, the area around Queenstown copped a dumping of rain around the time of our arrival and many areas were flooded and the planned drive route had to be altered – the group of Americans who were flown in a few days before us couldn't even get to the remote campsite Jeep had established. Wild, flowing rivers prevented vehicular access and the campsite would have been a soggy mess. Lucky for us, the rain slowed on our arrival and we enjoyed a fantastic drive through the scenic countryside.

The vehicles on offer were American-spec Gladiator Rubicon models, so they were equipped with Jeep's full arsenal of off-road weaponry. This includes Dana 44 live axles (front and rear) fitted with extra-low 4.1:1 gears and locking centres, plus 4.1s in the transfer case for extra low crawling ratios; a disconnecting front swaybar; and 33-inch off-road tyres and suspension. Some of the vehicles were fitted with extra Mopar accessories including 35-inch tyres, taller springs and Fox shocks ... one rig even had tube doors.

Like Jeep Australia did with the JL Jeep Wrangler, we will get an 'international-spec' JT Gladiator, which means the transfer case will offer 2WD, full-time 4x4, and 4x4 locked high and low range. Smaller 255/75 R17 tyres are likely to replace the 33s and, much to the dismay of off-road enthusiasts, those 35s will not be offered as a factory option.

Full local specification and pricing is yet to be revealed, but we can tell you that when it lands here the JT will come in two model variants – Overland and Rubicon – and be powered exclusively by the 213kW/353Nm 3.6-litre Pentastar V6 backed by the eight-speed ZF transmission. No manual transmission option and no diesel engine option (for now). This powertrain is backed by either a Command-Trac transfer case in the Overland specification, or the 4.1:1-gear RockTrac transfer case in the Rubicon Gladiator.

When quizzed on diesel engine options, Jeep officials were quiet as to whether we'd get the 2.2-litre four-cylinder diesel available in the Wrangler Rubicon or the 3.0-litre V6 diesel the US market gets in its Wrangler, or if we'd get a





The white-capped mountains near Queenstown provided a stunning backdrop.

diesel Gladiator at all. In a double-cab 4x4 ute market dominated by diesel engines it seems crazy not to offer one in Australia, but we'll have to wait for news on that front. Jeep may choose to not fit a diesel engine to the Gladiator at all, preferring to rely on its 4xe plug-in hybrid powertrain that was recently unveiled in Wrangler guise. This comes as part of the brand's aim to be "the greenest SUV brand" and offer electrified options on all of its models by 2022.

So, without knowing exactly what specification we'll get or how much does it cost, how does the Gladiator drive? Queenstown bills itself as the adventure capital of the world, and this, combined with inclement weather conditions, provided the perfect environment

to test the Gladiator. Despite the conditions and against all sensibility, we chose to drive the Mopar-equipped model with Fox shocks, 35s and tube doors.

If you've ever driven a JL Wrangler you'll be at home behind the wheel of the JT Gladiator; the view over the bonnet and the layout of the controls, audio and HVAC are identical between the two siblings. As is the sound, feel and performance of the V6 petrol engine and eight-speed slush 'box. It's an engine that likes to rev to maximise performance, and it really rewards the driver when you let it eat. While this isn't ideal for low-speed off-road driving, it adds to the fun factor of driving the Jeep on open roads, sealed or otherwise.

As expected, the Mopar tube doors do nothing to keep out the cold, but the Rubicon's heated front seats were well-appreciated. Surprisingly the doors let in very little water, be it from the rain, creek crossings or muddy bog holes; although, it's irrelevant to Australian buyers as they don't meet ADR standards. We'll have to be content with the Gladiator's removable roof sections for the feel of open-air motoring. Yes, just like the Wrangler, the Gladiator's entire roof is removable, or you can simply remove the front sections to let the sun shine in. In a market crowded with same-same double-cab utes, the JT is the only one to offer a removable top.

The Gladiator's rear seat is fairly upright like many others in this class of vehicle, but it still offers heaps of head and leg room for adult passengers, and they sit high to get a great view outside the car.

Mopar kit that was really appreciated on this Jeep include the 35-inch muddies and Fox

JEEP JT GLADIATOR RUBICON (US SPEC)	
ENGINE	Pentastar 3.6-litre V6
OUTPUT	213kW; 353Nm
TRANSMISSION	Eight-speed automatic
TRANSFER CASE	NV241OR Rock-Trac (Rubicon)
AXLES/RATIOS	Dana 44 / 4.1:1
CRAWL RATIO	84.2:1 (Rubicon manual)
STEERING	Electro-hydraulic
SUSPENSION	Links, coil springs, stabiliser bars (f/r)
TYRES	285/70R17 Falken A/T or M/T
BASE WEIGHT	2290kg (Rubicon)
PAYLOAD	700kg
TOWING CAPACITY	3470kg
WHEELBASE/TURNING CIRCLE	3487mm / 1356cm
APPROACH/RAMP-OVER/DEPARTURE ANGLES	43.4° / 20.3° / 26° (Rubicon)





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shocks, but, again, they probably won't be for Australian market vehicles. We did speak with Mark Bosanac, head of Mopar parts and service, and he expressed his ongoing frustration with Australia's modified vehicle regulations and state-by-state rules, but said he was hoping to find a working solution sometime in the future that would allow Mopar to offer factory-backed lifted suspension kits. With the 50mm-raised Mopar suspension and taller 35-inch rubber, the Mopar-equipped Gladiator crawled across rock-strewn rivers without touching down, while the stock-height models bumped and scraped their way through.

Like the Wrangler Rubicon, the Gladiator Rubicons have solid rock sliders running down their flanks to protect the sills against rock rash. Additionally, JT Rubis also have rock rails under the trailing edges of the cargo tub to protect the tub on departures. We did bump these on a non-Mopar-equipped JT on a particularly rocky descent, but their solid construction did the job of protecting the sheetmetal.

On the more open gravel roads the extra wheelbase of the JT Gladiator gives the truck a more planted and stable feel on the terrain than its wagon sibling, which also improves the ride quality on rougher ground. The Fox shocks fitted to some of the vehicles delivered a notably more controlled ride and handling. The steering is still light and vague in places, typical of Jeep's off-roaders, but it keeps the driver on his or her toes. The long 3487mm wheelbase didn't give any notable troubles in terms of turning circle on the tighter rocky tracks.

Performance-wise, the Pentastar V6 still delivers its best when revved hard and lacks a little down low. Thankfully the extra-low gearing in the transfer case and final drives reduces that

Even the roads of the South Island resembled rivers due to heavy rains and flooding.



lack of low-down grunt when driving off road, but it's still nothing like the torque of a diesel engine, or an EV motor for that matter.

The lack of engine options could be a decisive factor to the success of the JT Gladiator, should Jeep not offer a diesel variant. Whether you're considering JT for recreational touring, work truck, or off-road use, diesel is what most Australian buyers want. This is why almost every other double-cab 4x4 ute comes in diesel; certainly the ones that sell well.

Other factors will be load capacity and price. The international-spec JT Rubicon is rated to tow 2721kg and has a payload of just 620kg, both figures well short of the competition. We'll have to wait until closer to its midyear launch for a definitive figure on what it will cost you, but our tip is you won't be getting much change, if any at all, from \$75K, to put yourself in a Gladiator Rubicon. **4x4**

THE EXTRA-LOW GEARING IN THE TRANSFER CASE AND FINAL DRIVES REDUCES THE LACK OF LOW-DOWN GRUNT WHEN DRIVING OFF ROAD

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PART I

WORDS RON MOON PHOTOS ALASTAIR BROOK

RAVINES, RIDGES & RUINS

THE SOUTHERN AND CENTRAL SECTIONS OF THE FLINDERS RANGES HAVE MUCH TO OFFER THE ADVENTUROUS FOUR-WHEEL TRAVELLER.

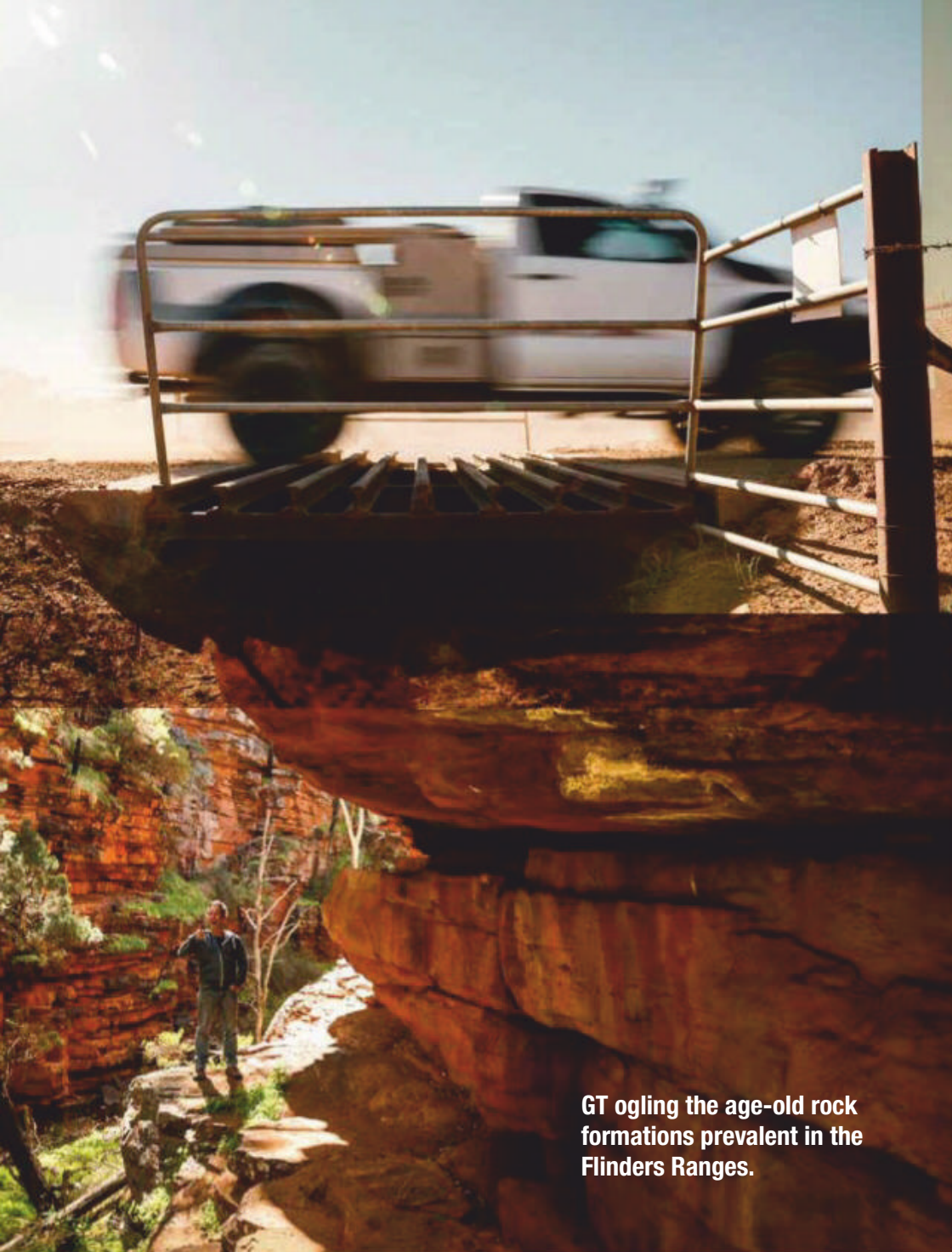
THE WALK was steep, the 200 or so steps along the way letting you know there were muscles in your legs that hadn't been used for a while. But it was worth it. The gorge, a sharp-edged narrow defile, comes as a surprise to most first-time visitors to this region, the red, raw rock closing in as you wander down the creek that cuts through the range here. Sunlight only makes it into the narrowest part of the ravine during late morning or early afternoon, and you can be excused for thinking you are at other more famous canyons in Australia such as Stanley Chasm west of Alice Springs, Echidna Chasm in the far away Bungle Bungles, or even Claustal Canyon in the Blue Mountains. Water nearly always trickles through here, even though it is underground in places. Ferns and other cool-loving plants dot the chasm walls and floor, marking a startling change to the sun-bleached plains and rugged hills outside the hidden recesses of this abyss.

We wandered down the gorge and then out across the low intervening rise to Blue Gum Flat, where road access into the park ends ... and I wondered why I never started my walk into and out of the gorge from there.

We were exploring Alligator Gorge (no alligators have ever been seen here!) where the ragged, rugged spine of the hills and peaks we know as the Flinders Ranges rear up from the surrounding flat plains. On the western edge of the range, a narrow coastal strip borders the shallow, ever-narrowing arm of Spencer Gulf, while to the east flat dry plains stretch away to the NSW border and 'Corner Country'.

The Flinders officially start just a few kilometres south, where the rounded hills, cleared of most trees, quickly give way to more rugged peaks and valleys. Just north of Port Germein, one of my favourite coastal towns with a good pub and a large dose of history, the hills and peaks crowd together to form what we know as Mount Remarkable National Park.





GT ogling the age-old rock formations prevalent in the Flinders Ranges.

Colorado LSX relished the challenges we dished its way.

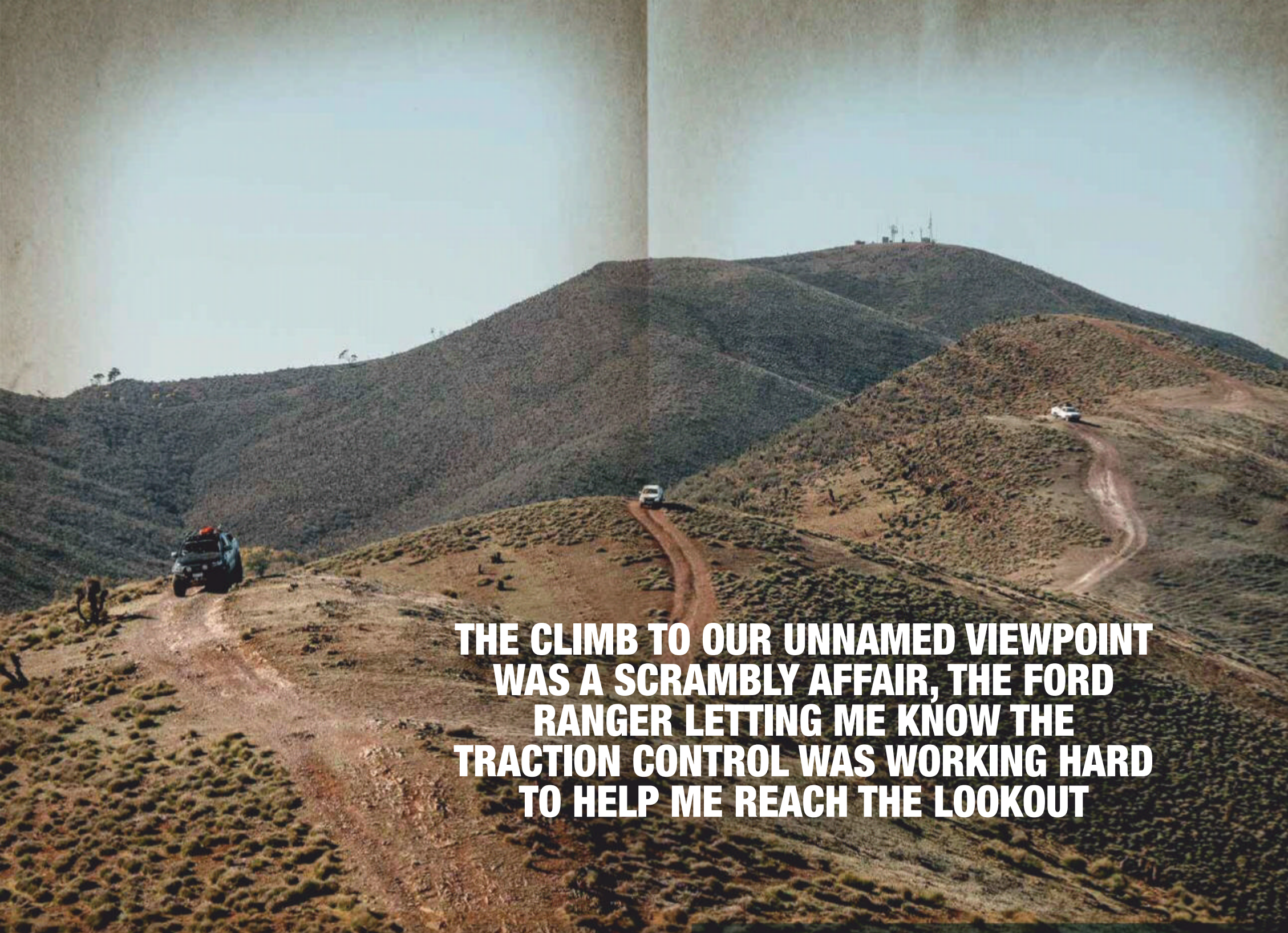
Our trip had started at the small hamlet of Melrose, which lies tucked into the range at the foot of Mount Remarkable. This area around the high peak is one of the better-watered areas of the Flinders and, as this latest trip was to show, the relatively lush areas of the southern coastal Flinders and the striking drier country just a short distance east and farther north were in stark contrast to one another.

As we headed east away from the dominant peak, the country dried out quickly with each passing kilometre. By the time we passed through Johnburgh – a near ‘ghost town’ and a relic from the days when this area had been opened up for wheat farming, with a population now of just two – a cloud of white dust was following each and every vehicle in the convoy.

Upon arrival at Bendleby Ranges we were greeted by hosts Charlie and Jane, and without further ado we headed out on some of the tracks which took us along a creek bed and past some delightful campsites. The route then led up a high crest of the main range along the North-South Ridge track, to a fine viewpoint where we took in the sunset. The breeze, though, was biting cold, so once the sun had disappeared we returned to the homestead, bunking down in the shearers’ quarters for the night.

The next morning, even though we had hardly touched the tracks around the nearby hills and valleys, we headed to the Hungry Ranges about 10km south-east of the homestead. Charlie had just pushed a new track up along a ridgeline to the top of a prominent but unnamed hill and wanted to show us the route. Once we began to climb the range and then trace up along Billy Goat Ridge we knew we were in for something pretty special, as the track features narrow rocky ridges that provide expansive views





**THE CLIMB TO OUR UNNAMED VIEWPOINT
WAS A SCRAMBLY AFFAIR, THE FORD
RANGER LETTING ME KNOW THE
TRACTION CONTROL WAS WORKING HARD
TO HELP ME REACH THE LOOKOUT**



**You can't miss
the turnoff to the
Bendleby Ranges.**



**Land Rovers on
guard at Wilmington
Toy Museum.**



Quornucopia shop, next to the Criterion hotel.



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of the surrounding countryside. The climb to our unnamed viewpoint was a scrambly affair, the Ford Ranger I was driving letting me know the traction control was working hard to help me reach the lookout.

All too soon we were carving tracks westward, passing through the small village of Carrieton where the pub has recently closed; which isn't a good sign, but hopefully it'll open again soon. Our route then took us through the hill country of Mookra and out onto the billiard-flat savanna of the Willochra Plains, where at times deep sections of bulldust enveloped the vehicles.

Arriving in Quorn, where I had spent many joyful years as a young kid, we found our way to the old historic railway station, home to the famous Pichi Richi Railway (1878). This was once part of the original Ghan Railway north to Farina (arriving 1882), Marree (1884) and finally to Alice Springs (1929). Steam buffs and kids will love the experience.

With a key from the info centre, which is housed in the venerable old building, we headed to Warren Gorge, one of my favourite places in the ranges and a spot I've camped at many times. A gate at the far side of the public reserve opened the way to the Arden Hills 4WD Track, which is a 22km-long route climbing

ARDEN HILLS 4WD TRACK IS A 22KM ROUTE THAT CLIMBS THROUGH STEEP AND SPECTACULAR HILL COUNTRY

through some spectacular hill country on what are, at times, steep sections of trail. From the highest ridges you'll have fine views south to the rocky crest of Devils Peak, west to Lake Torrens, south-west to the head of Spencer Gulf, and north-east across the ranges to the jagged outline of Wilpena Pound. That evening we threw down swags at one of the designated campsites along the track and had a quiet evening with just a few 'roos to keep us company.

Heading north to the very heart of the ranges we took the back road, crossing a trickle of salty water in Willochra Creek and visiting Hugh Proby's grave, near where he drowned in the normally dry creek. Hugh was once the owner of the one-time vast Kanyaka (sheep) Station and we stopped at the ruins of this sprawling outpost to admire its former glory. Broken up in the 1880s to form smaller wheat farming blocks, the ruins of these and the small towns such as Wilson, Kanyaka, Hookina and Simmonston are testimony to that folly and the idea that 'the rain followed the plough'.

We refuelled in Hawker and arrived in historic Blinman at what seemed like peak hour, the little cafe busy with lunches and the pub dotted with people enjoying a beer on the front verandah; I had never seen the ol' town so swamped with visitors!



Travel Planner

FLINDERS RANGES

www.frc.sa.gov.au/tourism

PICHI RICHI RAILWAY

www.pichirichirailway.org.au

HAWKER

<https://hawkervic.info>

WILPENA POUND

www.wilpenapound.com.au

BLINMAN MINE TOURS

heritageblinmanmine.com.au

Best map is: *Hema Maps The Flinders Ranges.*

Best guide is: *Ron & Viv Moon's The Flinders Ranges an Adventurer's Guide.*

Bendleby Ranges

BENDLEBY Ranges is located on The Springs Station, about 65km north of Orroroo in the south-east of the Flinders Ranges. Owned by the Luckraft family for more than 40 years, Jane, Warren, Kylie and Charlie are your hosts on this working sheep property of 15,000ha.

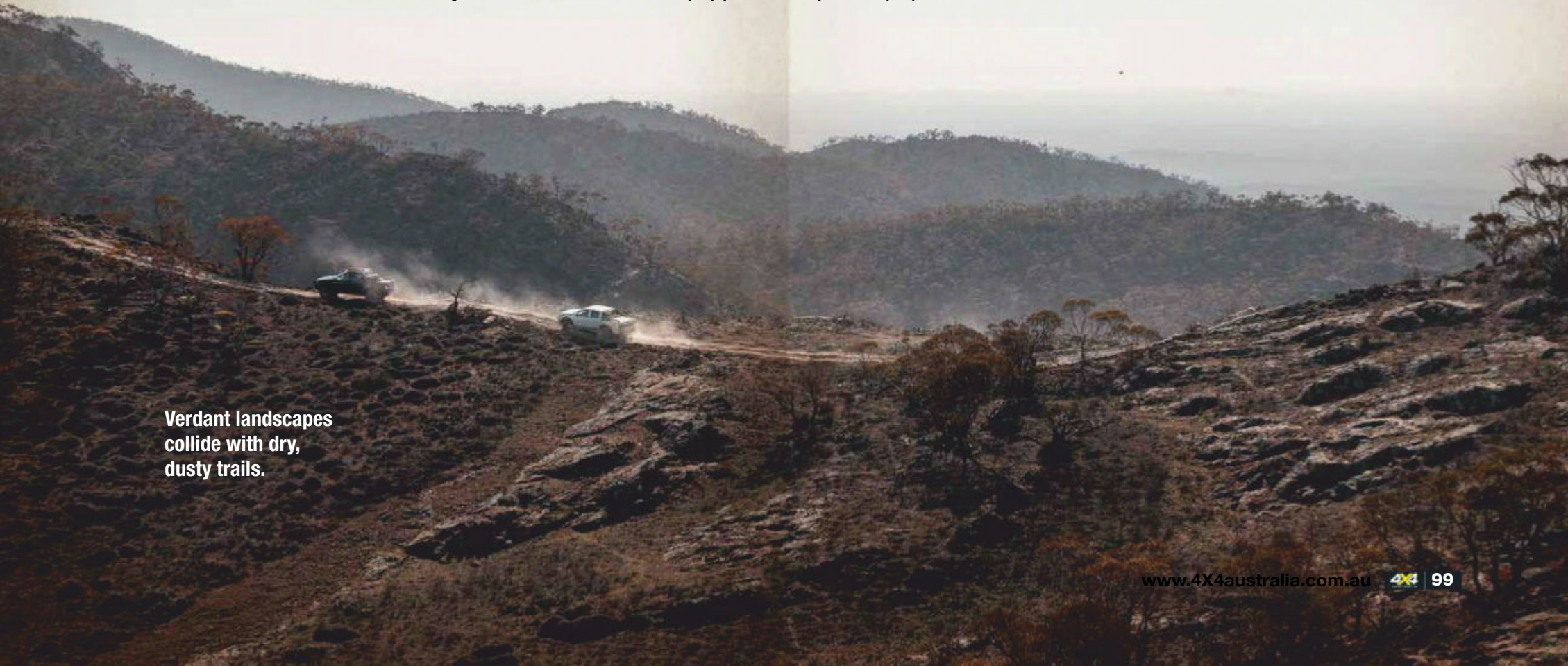
The property, along with adjoining leasehold land, has mountain-bike trails, horse-riding routes, walking trails and numerous 4WD tracks through the Bendleby Ranges and the nearby (more rugged and challenging) Hungry Ranges. These 4WD trails, totalling more than 180km of two-track, vary in length and capability, with some suitable for all-wheel drive vehicles while others are only suitable for the best-equipped

vehicles and most-experienced drivers. The variety can keep you busy for a couple of hours or a few days and, as we discovered, there is always a recently constructed track to try or something new to experience.

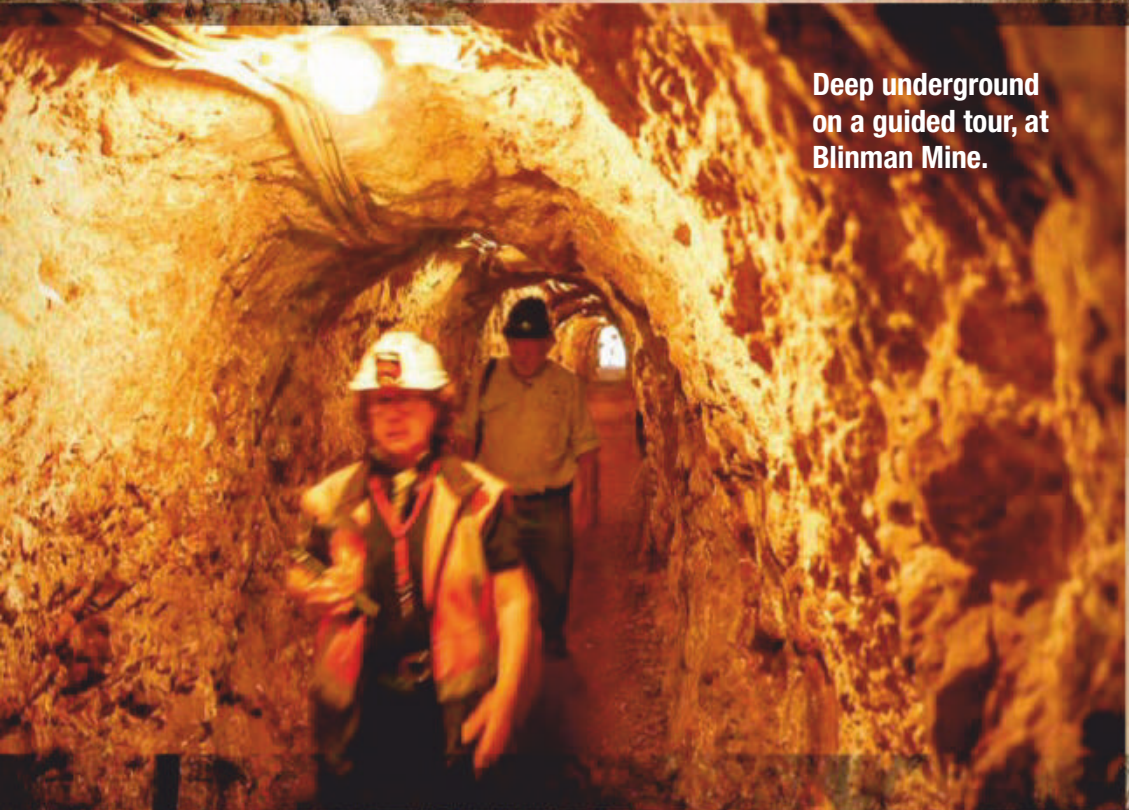
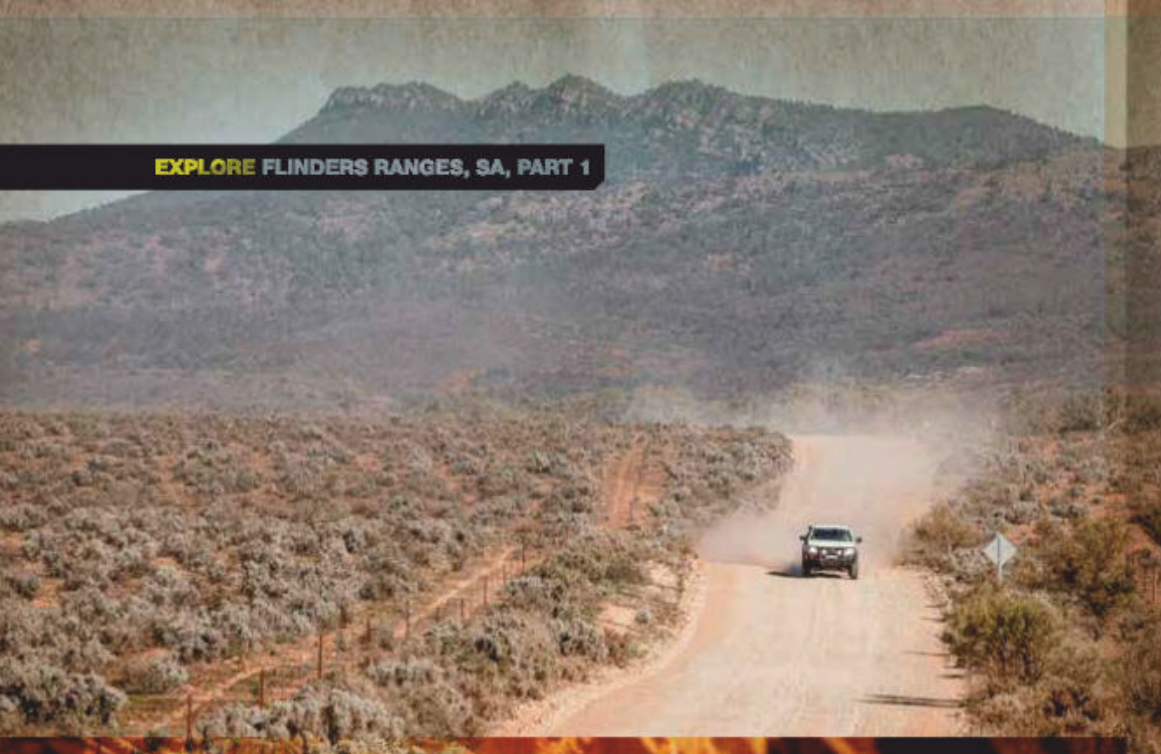
You can choose from unpowered sites or powered campsites situated close to the Sunset camp kitchen, while remote camps can be found along secluded creeks on the property.

Accommodation options include the shearers' quarters, Gumdale Cottage and the five-bedroom Crotta Homestead.

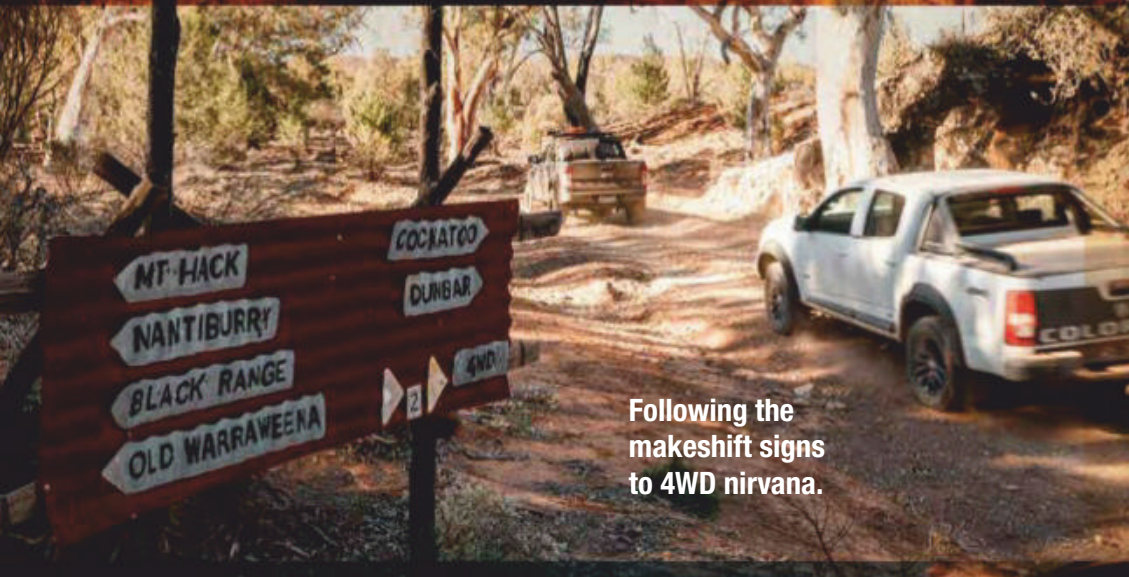
Dogs are allowed by prior arrangement. For more information and pricing, visit www.bendlebyranges.com.au or phone (08) 8658 9064.



Verdant landscapes
collide with dry,
dusty trails.



Deep underground on a guided tour, at Blinman Mine.



Following the makeshift signs to 4WD nirvana.



Copper had been discovered here in 1859 by a one-legged shepherd, 'Pegleg' Blinman. He sold the rights to his find and made a fortune, and from 1862 through to 1907 the mine produced around 10,000 tonnes of copper. Still, it hardly ever made a profit and after it closed it was left to ruin, until a few years ago when the local community got together and, after a lot of hard work, opened the mine as a tourist venture. It obviously worked, as now it is best to book to get on an underground tour, while a self-guided walking trail is available at all times. We relished the experience of wandering underground in what are comparatively roomy and well-lit drives that take you deep underground.

With time a constant concern, we headed south on the blacktop to Willow Springs, home of the fabled Skytrek 4WD Track. Most of our group had experienced this great all-day 80km route before, so with permission from the owners we headed off on a shortened version that would get us to the high points and fine lookouts before sunset. The track takes you through a variety of habitats and rock formations before climbing up onto the high points, which give outstanding views of some of the best range country in the whole of the Flinders. It is a fantastic 4WD route and, while we have been on it a number of times, we never get sick of the drive, the challenge or the outstanding views.

Arriving back at the homestead after last light we found our way to one of the well-established campsites dotted along the creek less than a kilometre from the farmhouse, its nearby workshops, community camp kitchen, and shower and toilet facilities.

After a hurried breakfast and a quick goodbye to the Reynolds family who own and run Willow Springs, we were on the road again. Nobody ever said

THE ROUTE THROUGH BUNYEROO AND BRACHINA GORGES RATES AS ONE OF THE BEST DRIVES ON A PUBLIC ROAD IN AUSTRALIA

Arden Hills

LOCATED just 20km north of Quorn, Arden Hills is a working sheep property where the 4WD track begins and ends at slightly different points just out the back of the popular camping and picnic area of Warren Gorge. The track isn't to be confused with the Mount Arden 4WD Track, which is located nearby on Argadells Station (www.argadells.com.au).

This route of just 25km or so will take you quite a few hours to complete, with some gnarly sections to keep you on your toes. Great views of the surrounding country and distant views of the head of the Spencer Gulf can be had on the highest ridges just south of Mount Arden.

There are a number of campsites and/or picnic spots along the way to enjoy and prolong your stay.

Dogs are not allowed. For more information and the key to access the track, contact the Flinders Ranges Visitor Centre in Quorn by phoning (08) 8620 0510, or check out <https://southaustralia.com/products/flinders-ranges/attraction/arden-hills-4wd-track>



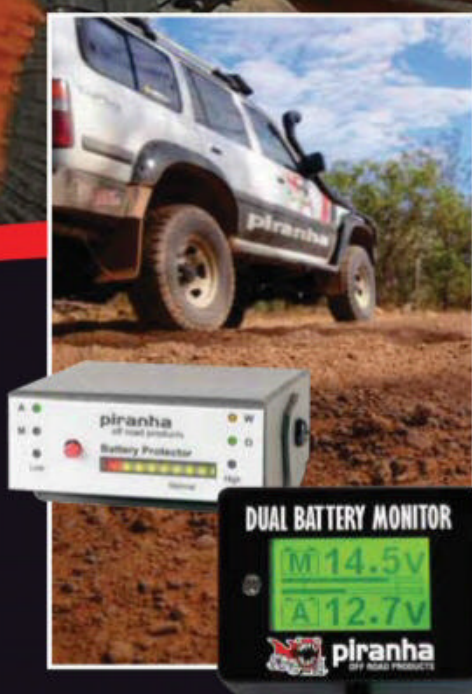
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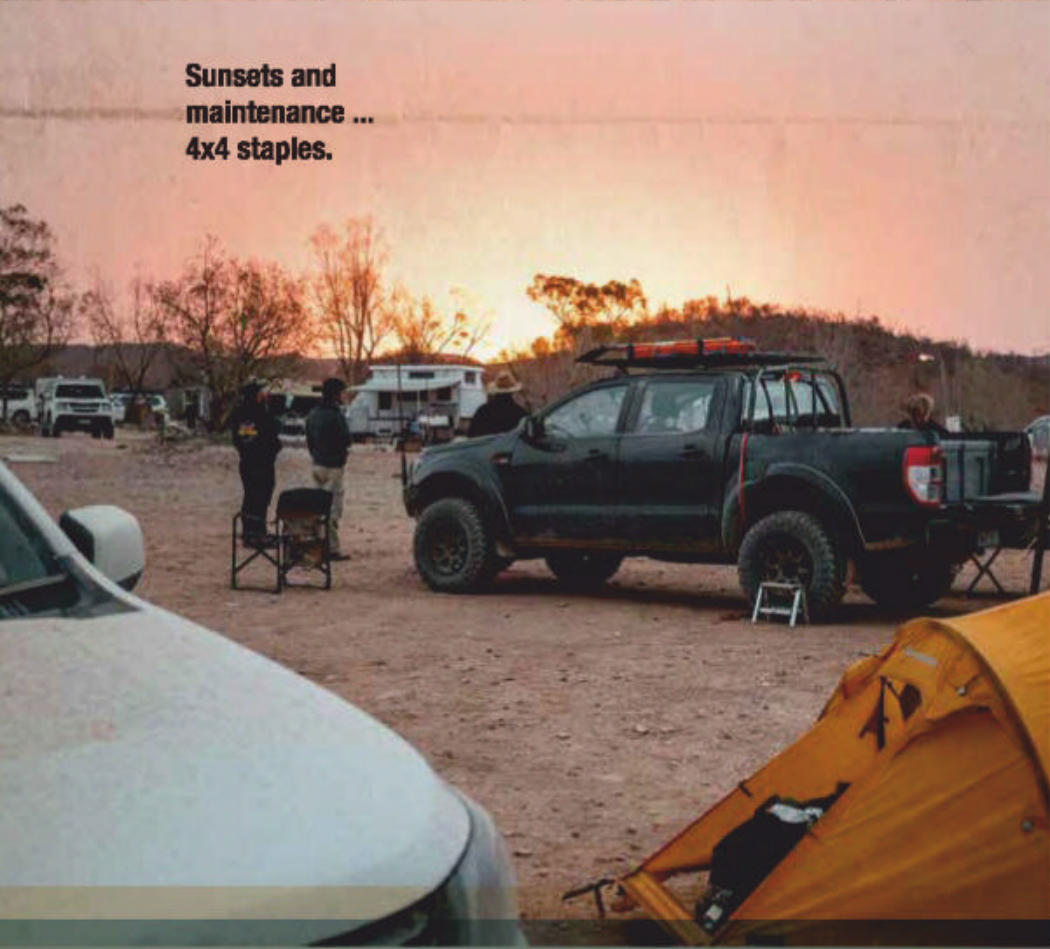
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THE VIEWS FROM THE BUNYEROO AND RAZORBACK LOOKOUTS ARE MADE EVEN BETTER IN THE EARLY MORNING LIGHT



Sunsets and
maintenance ...
4x4 staples.

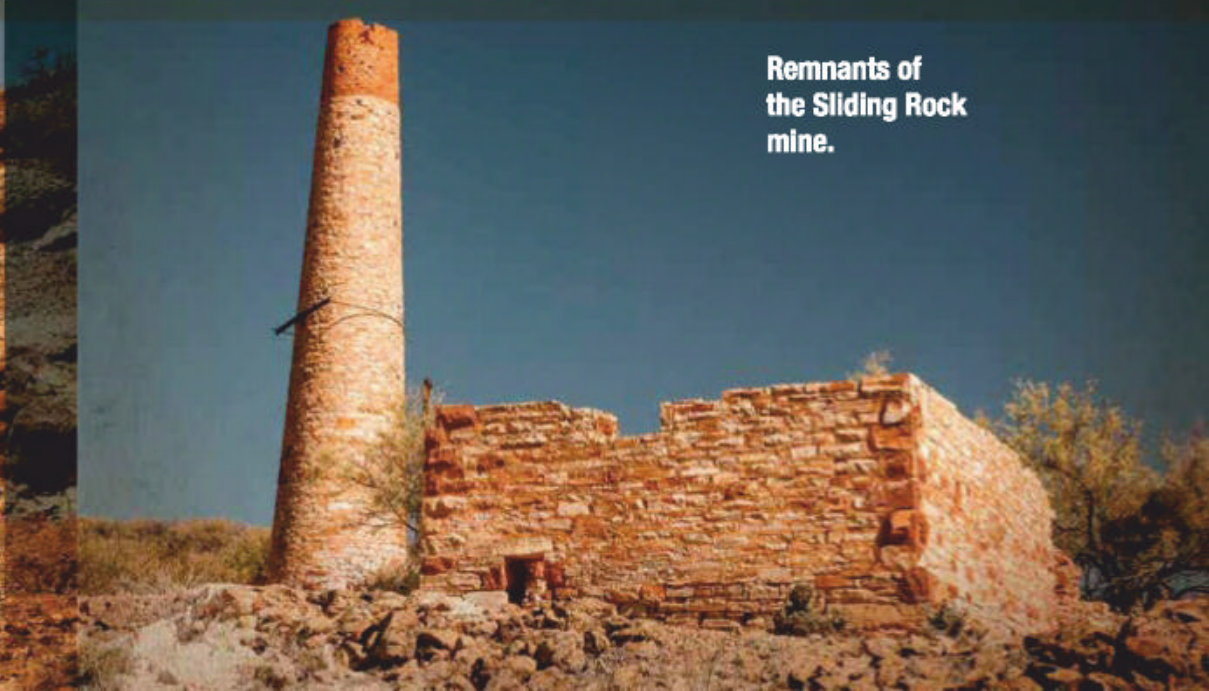
shooting a video – which was what we were here for on this trip and hence on a tight timeframe – was easy! Still, there was a good reason for our early departure. The route through Bunyeroo and Brachina Gorges rates as one of the best drives on a public road anywhere in Australia. I've done it dozens of times and, while it's hardly a 4WD track, I never get sick of it or the spectacular views, especially from the Bunyeroo and Razorback lookouts, which are made even better in the early morning light.

Through Brachina Gorge, which is designated a Geological Trail with interpretive signs at significant points, you become a momentary time traveller as you pass through ever-older rock formations, while great peaks such as 'The Guardian' dominate the scenery. In places, a short walk and a careful eye will reveal fossils from a time when life on earth was very young. In fact, just west of here in the Ediacara Reserve (planned to soon be a National Park), some of the best fossils of early life forms, dating back more than 570 million years, have been discovered.

Once our time travelling was over and we were back in the



Gorge country.



Remnants of
the Sliding Rock
mine.

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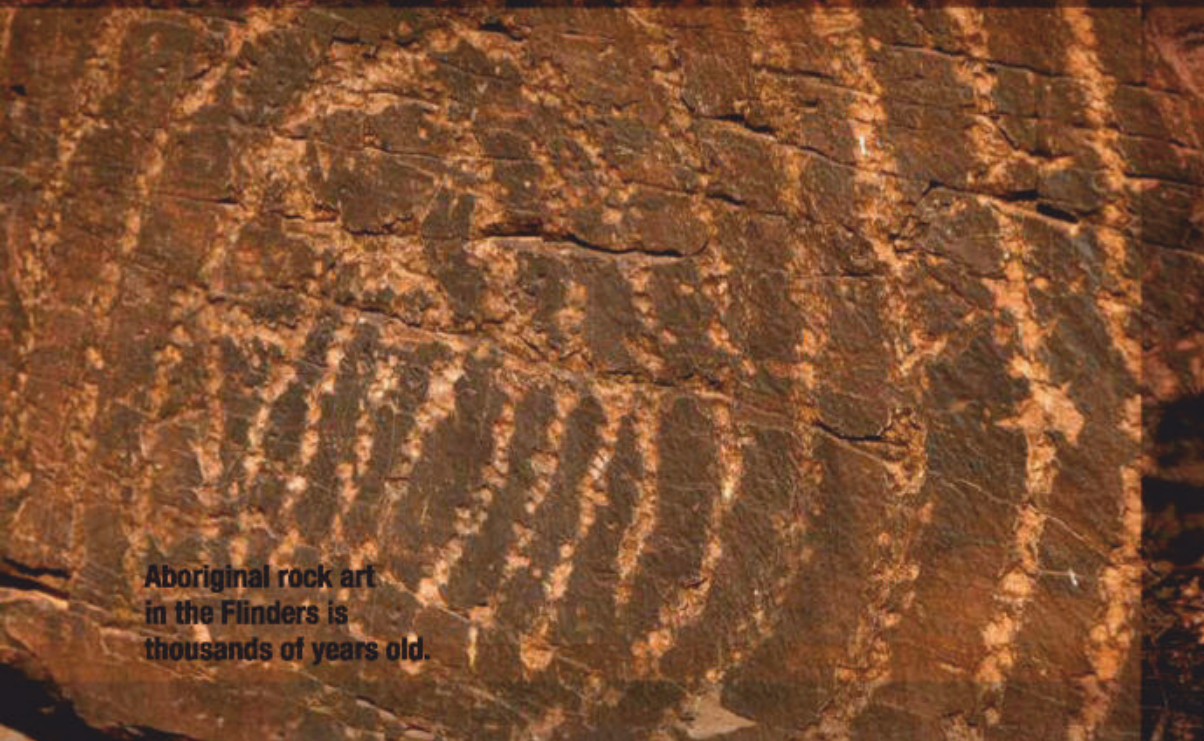


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WILPENA STATION HAS ONE OF THE MOST HISTORIC AND DELIGHTFUL SETTINGS YOU CAN FIND ANYWHERE IN OUTBACK SOUTH AUSTRALIA



Aboriginal rock art in the Flinders is thousands of years old.




Vulkathunha
Gammon Ranges National Park



21st century, we headed to the Wilpena Resort and the nearby historic homestead of Wilpena Station, where we met up with Keith Rasheed, one of the legendary figures of the Flinders. At the old homestead, which has one of the most historic and delightful settings you can find anywhere in outback SA, we chatted about the Flinders and the Wilpena Resort, which Keith's father had started and the family had owned until recently.

I looked out at the huge, old red gums that scatter the flat around the homestead and wondered at the history they could tell and the droughts they have already survived.

"Those trees are pretty old," Keith commented. "Some mightn't make it, but look at the young ones, they'll survive and the country will come back."

I could only hope so ... and I knew I'd be back to see how they go! 

Willow Springs

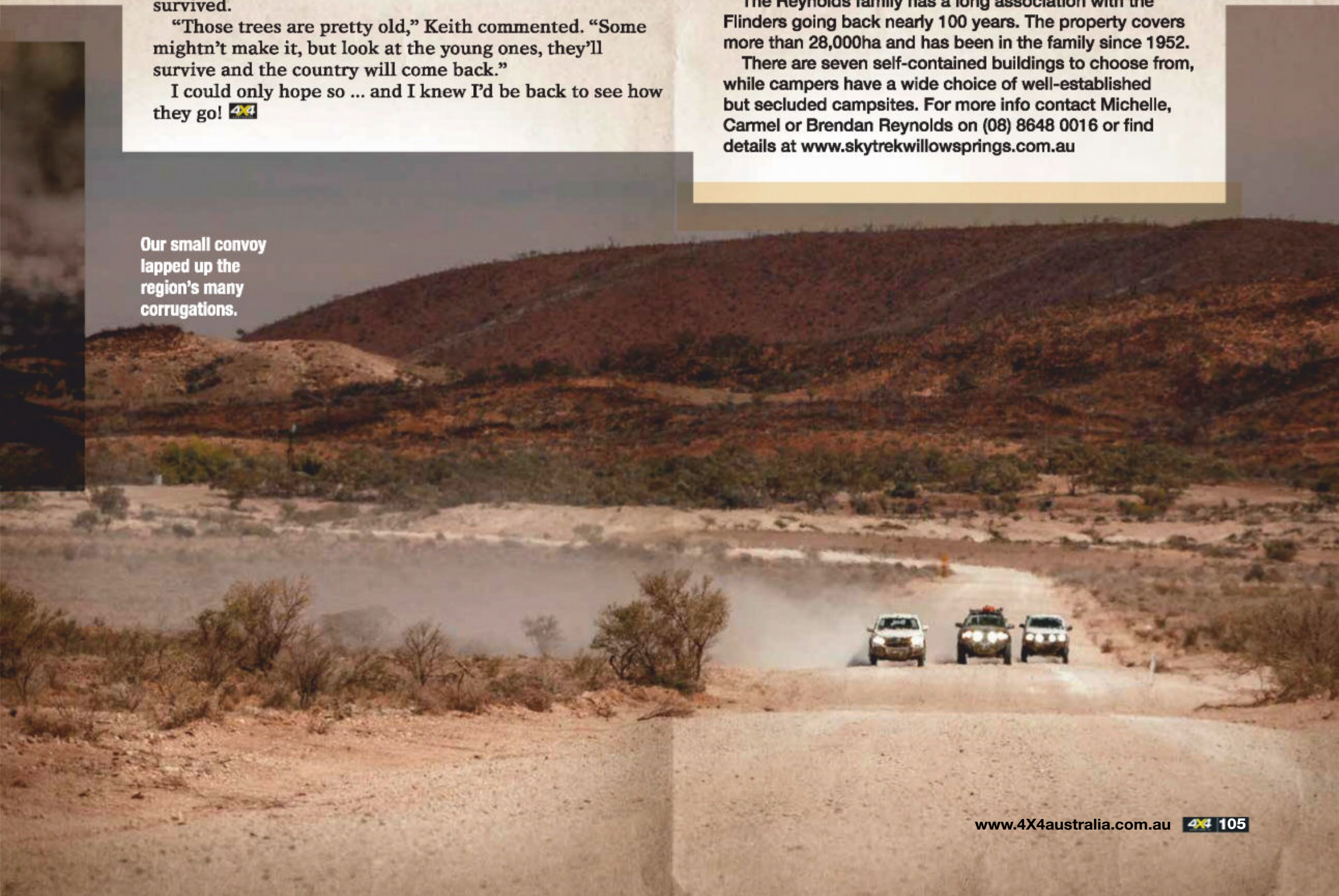
HOME TO the famous Skytrek 4WD Track, there is more to this property than the great track that offers fabulous views and a range of challenges along the way.

Located in the heart of the ranges and just north of the famous Wilpena Pound, the property is ideally situated to act as a base for not only experiencing Skytrek but also to explore the surrounding ranges and delights such as Brachina and Bunyeroo gorges, Blinman and the Prairie Hotel at Parachilna.

The Reynolds family has a long association with the Flinders going back nearly 100 years. The property covers more than 28,000ha and has been in the family since 1952.

There are seven self-contained buildings to choose from, while campers have a wide choice of well-established but secluded campsites. For more info contact Michelle, Carmel or Brendan Reynolds on (08) 8648 0016 or find details at www.skytrekwillowsprings.com.au

Our small convoy lapped up the region's many corrugations.





BEIGE KILLER

WORDS DAN EVERETT PHOTOS BRAD MISKIEWICZ



**THIS WILD 'RADO
IS PUTTING AN
END TO BEIGE
4X4s ONCE AND
FOR ALL ... AND
THAT'S JUST FOR
STARTERS.**





PICTURE your dream 4x4. A healthy canopy set-up on the back for remote touring; a locker at either end, with some chunky mud-tyres ensuring you'll make it up any track you point it at; a bullbar up front to keep it safe from animal strikes; and some killer suspension underneath helping smooth out corrugation after corrugation.

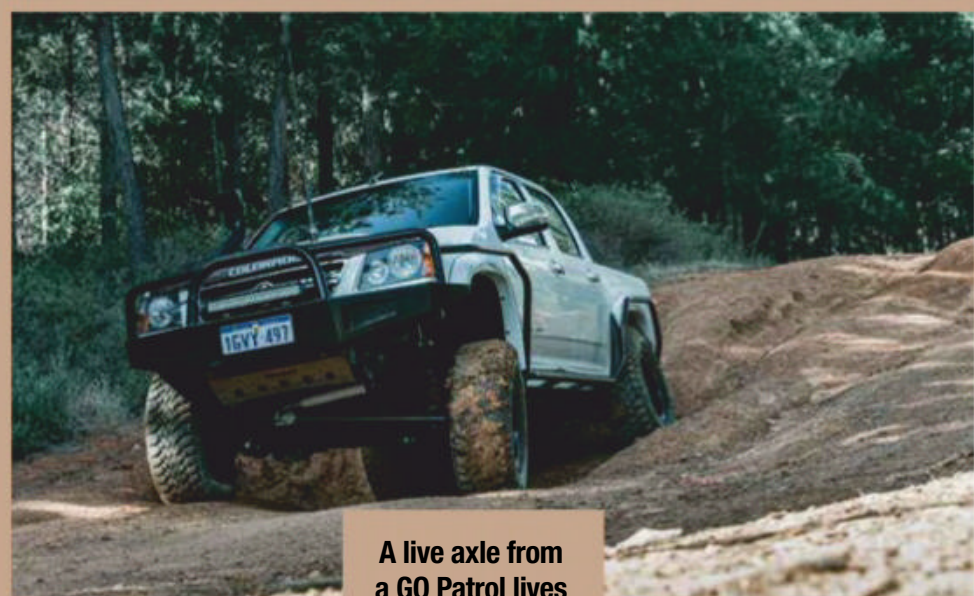
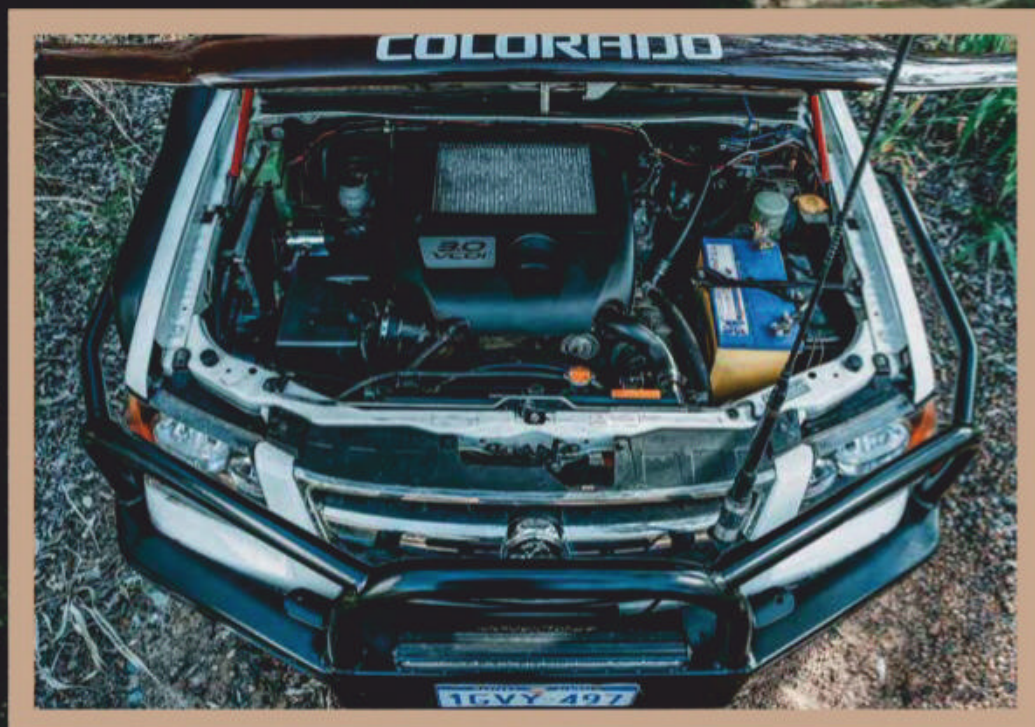
Got a good mental picture in mind? Perfect. There's one just like it sitting proudly on Loyalty Beach right now. There are two more just a short drive up the track at Punsand Bay. There are three more rolling into Birdsville as you read this, and another four parked up at the pub at Weipa. Most of them are beige, or Sandy Taupe as the marketing departments have dubbed it. You see, while 4x4s are a product of function over form they very frequently end up being cookie-cutter builds, straight out of the mould someone else built, just with a few different stickers slapped on the side.

Tyler's Colorado is far from beige, in the figurative and literal sense. It's his perfect creation, every square inch of it dreamt up in his mind and pieced together methodically by his own hands to create something truly unique – something that stands out from the crowd.

THE FOUNDATION

LIKE ANY decent build, Tyler built his 4x4 on a solid foundation. Underneath, where once lied rudimentary leaf springs and underwhelming independent suspension, there's now something far more fit for purpose. Starting from the back Tyler sliced and diced the bracketry off both the chassis and the rear axle, relegating the leaf springs to the scrap pile. In their place is now a full coil setup utilising the factory Colorado rear end with a set of home-brew control arms holding it in place. Based off the NP300 coil rear geometry, Tyler pieced together the parallel 4-link and Panhard arrangement before fabbing up mounts to make it all ride on NP300 coils. The 10-inch-travel TJM shocks keep the ride quality in check, with the mounts tucked nice and close to the tyres to help with ground clearance.

Up front has copped a similar treatment. One of the last 'old-school' short-arm torsion bar independent front suspension setups, the Colorado's stock arrangement was never going to be a serious performer, no matter how many shiny parts Tyler threw at it. Instead, out came the grinder



A live axle from a GQ Patrol lives up front, in lieu of the Colorado's stock setup.



Full coil setup
in the rear
utilises a set
of shed-built
control arms.



TJM shocks
provide 10 inches
of travel, giving
the Colorado more
surefooted off-road
control and feel.



again, with the OEM bracketry being expertly removed from the frame rails.

With a blank canvas, Tyler rolled a GQ Patrol live axle up into place and set about making it work. Stock Patrol radius arms locate the axle fore and aft and find a home in custom brackets on the chassis side; a stock Panhard does similar for side-to-side movement. There's a second set of 10-inch-travel TJM shocks smoothing out the ride; although, this time there are LC79 coil springs holding the whole affair in the air, with LC80

progressive bump stops ironing out Tyler's more ambitions lines.

ISUZU HEART

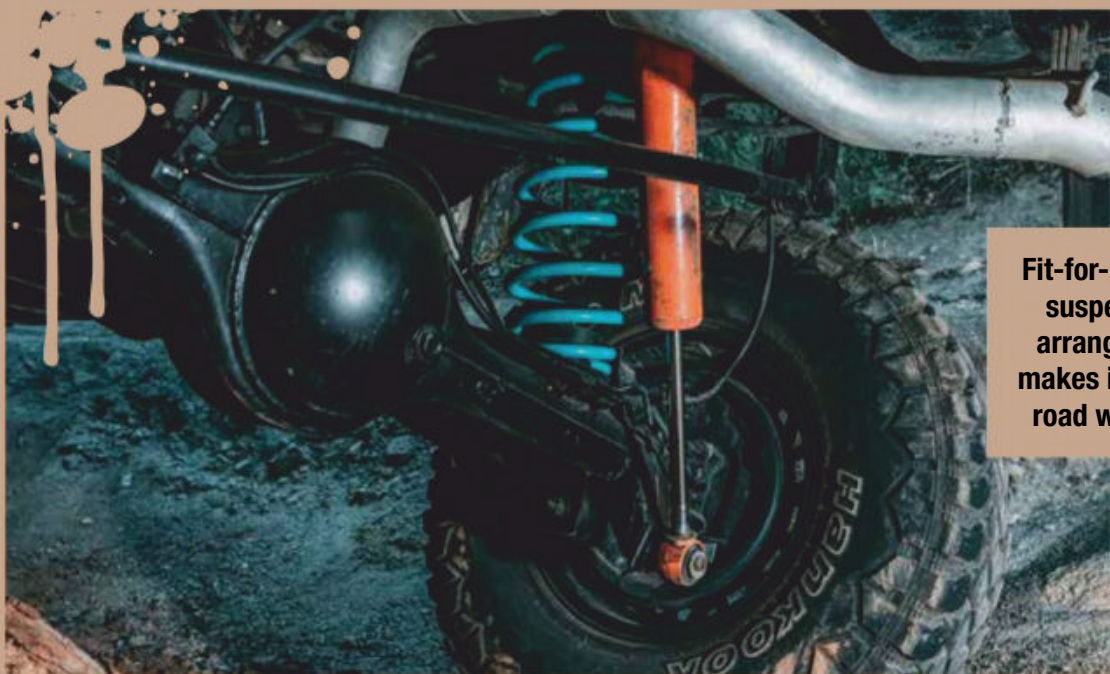
SENDING power to both axles is the renowned 4JJ1 3.0-litre turbo-diesel four-cylinder by Isuzu. It's earned itself a reputation for easy power, and Tyler flies that flag high. It's pushing out a massive 200hp and 540Nm to the rear wheels with basic bolt-on modifications. A Safari Snorkel on the intake side helps it breathe clean, cool air, up out of the churning dust down in the stock location. It feeds down into the stock turbo and intercooler, before firing out the other end through a full three-inch exhaust system.

The stock manual cog-swapper has proved itself more than up to the task of handling the power, and a TRE air locker up front gives Tyler that oh-so-important get-out-of-gaol-free card.

"That locker cost me about \$100 in metal," he told us with a laugh. "A bloke I know wanted a bullbar built for his 4x4 and paid me with a locker."

Of course then it should come as no surprise that Tyler's bar work is more than a little unique, too. Starting from up front, the one-off bar is actually built on the foundations of an Xrox unit.

"I started with the centre section of an old Xrox bar," Tyler says. "I cut off the tube wings



Fit-for-purpose suspension arrangement makes it an off-road weapon.



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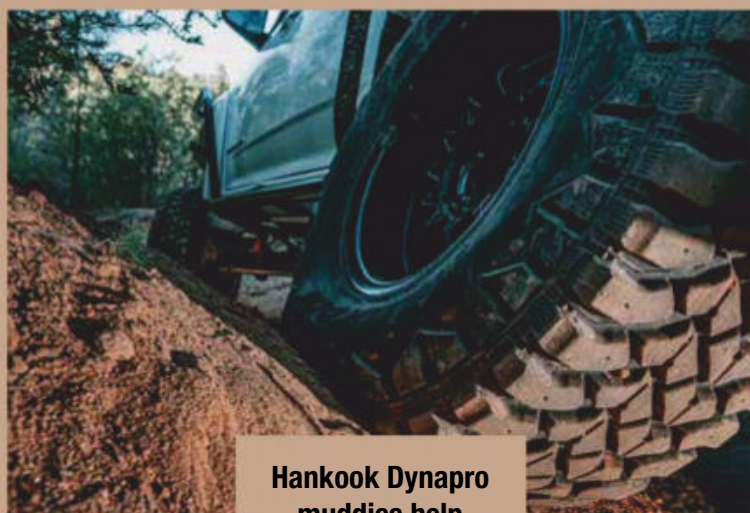
TRADESMAN SERIES



CHECKERPLATE SERIES



FLEET SERIES



Hankook Dynapro mudsies help improve ground clearance.



Other than a few gauges and a UHF radio, the interior is pretty much stock.



on either side and folded up some plate wings to enclose it in.”

While the welder and grinder were out, he also worked in a new set of headlight hoops, giving the bullbar a factory look – and all of his own design.

SLIDING ON RAILS

MOVING down the flanks and Tyler protected his delicate parts with a set of heavy-duty scrub bars tying in the bullbar to the sliders. He’s done the same again in the rear, allowing the tough-as-nails Colorado to practically slide along obstacles from headlight to tail-light with damage limited to nothing more than some scuffed paint.

Eagle-eyed readers might note there’s something a little odd about that rear bar and

THE TOUGH-AS-NAILS COLORADO PRACTICALLY SLIDES ALONG OBSTACLES, WITH DAMAGE LIMITED TO NOTHING MORE THAN SCUFFED PAINT



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A CLOSER LOOK



01 FACTORY BAR

Tyler welded up his own bullbar with a factory look.



02 BREATHE IN

A Safari snorkel feeds air into the stock turbo and intercooler, aiding the 4JJ1 Isuzu engine.



03 TAIL-END

Binning the tailgate let the jerries and spare tyre move forward for less overhang.



04 INSTA-FAMOUS

Everyone wants to be *Insta*-famous these days. Follow Tyler at: @SAS_Colorado



05 VITAL WATCH

Tyler keeps an eye on vitals via Boost and EGT gauges, and an Engine Data Scan tool.

SAME SAME BUT DIFFERENT

IF YOU'VE been under the front end of a Holden Colorado or the similarly named Chevy Colorado, you might have noticed a few similarities in the suspension and chassis design. You'd notice the same thing again looking under the Isuzu D-MAX and the GMC Canyon. Hell, you'd see them again under the Hummer H3. All five models were developed simultaneously for what is known as the GMT 355 platform.

Just like *Instagram* is overloaded with same same but different builds, so are dealerships all over the world.

While the differences are mostly cosmetic – different headlights, bolt-on panels and interiors – the drivetrains are the differences that excite us. A whole host of engines were available including the 4JJ1 and other various small-capacity General Motors and Isuzu engines; and both the Chevy Colorado and Hummer H3 were available with a 5.3L V8 LS engine, making the Aussie Colorado prime for an engine swap.



tyre carrier. While a tub-chop and tube rear bar aren't exactly groundbreaking, Tyler's managed to do it and throw his tailgate in the bin at the same time.

"I really didn't want to eat too much into my departure angle," he tells us. "I ditched the tailgate and used the space to push the spare tyre and twin jerry cans further into the tub for less overhang."

There's no chance of anything falling through the gaps either. Resting behind the swing-out carrier is – you guessed it – a home-brew camping setup. Tyler The Creator rolled out the tools yet again, this time constructing a full false floor in the tub, giving him storage underneath without impacting his ability to hurl gear on top. There's a huge roll-out drawer hiding below, perfect for bulky items, with a

120amp Bosch AGM second battery finding a home in there too. It's powered by a 25amp Projecta charger, with solar input waiting for his camping setup to grow.

While the Colorado is clearly built for hardcore wheeling, there are a few camping concessions on the inside. A GME UHF keeps communication lines open between the convoy or spotters, while Boost and EGT gauges work hand-in-hand with the Engine Data Scan tool to keep the oil-burner happy.

In a world full of carbon-copy *Instagram* builds, Tyler's rig is a refreshing take. A unique platform, unique mods and a unique purpose. It doesn't take a huge credit card to build something truly capable; sometimes all it takes is a little hard work and some planning. **4x4**

By losing the tailgate, space opened up for the spare tyre and twin jerry cans.



**IN A WORLD FULL
OF CARBON-COPY
INSTAGRAM BUILDS,
TYLER'S RIG IS A
REFRESHING TAKE**



Dinosaur footprints in the mud at Lake Quarry are millions of years old.





WORDS AND PHOTOS KEV SMITH

OPALS & DINOSAURS

**THIS OUTBACK QUEENSLAND ADVENTURE TAKES IN OLD
OPAL MINING TOWNS AND MUCH OLDER PREHISTORIC
BEASTS. WELCOME TO WINTON SHIRE.**





The Australian Age of Dinosaurs Museum, located in Winton.



AS PART of our Outback Queensland odyssey we headed to Winton in far-western Queensland to check out part of the Dinosaur Trail that's known around the world as the dinosaur capital of Australia. There are actually four parts to the trail; two are located in Winton, which is 1150km west of Brisbane, and the other two are farther north at Richmond and Hughenden.

The Australian Age of Dinosaurs Museum is 25km south-east of Winton and has the largest display of Aussie dinosaur bones in the world, plus you can check out the lab where bones are cleaned for display. The other Winton spot is Lark Quarry, about 110km south-west, where you can see impressions of dinosaur footprints in mud from a stampede that occurred millions of years ago.

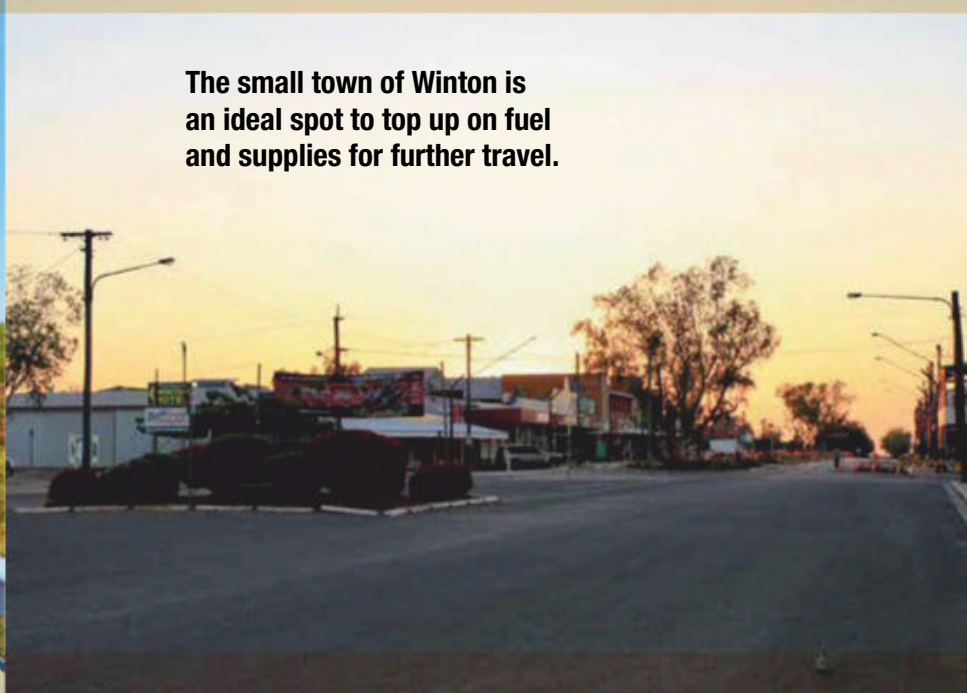
There's plenty of fascinating history in the Winton shire and, unofficially, it is the gateway to far western Queensland and beyond. If you want to spend some time here to check out Winton on

foot, there are a couple of caravan parks within walking distance of town, in which you'll find a couple of cool old pubs that date back to 1895; Arno's Wall, which is a huge manmade wall with quirky stuff cemented in it including the kitchen sink; the Waltzing Matilda Museum; various opal stores; and more.

Head 125km south of Winton and you'll find the working opal fields and 'town' of Opalton, which is steeped in history and still offers the chance to find a little colour if you search in the right places. Being so remote, you'll need to stock up at Winton as there is no phone service, no fuel (carry enough for a good 400km), no shops and, for the majority of this loop, no help of any kind. The tar ends about 10km out of Winton and the rest of the drive to Opalton is on wide dirt roads. The countryside is flat, with the occasional jump or rise offering views for the next stint in what is a relentless journey over millions of corrugations. The scrub consists of low mulga trees with scatterings of silver-leafed

**THE COUNTRYSIDE IS FLAT,
WITH THE OCCASIONAL RISE
OFFERING VIEWS FOR THE
NEXT STINT IN WHAT IS A
RELENTLESS JOURNEY OVER
MILLIONS OF CORRUGATIONS**

The small town of Winton is an ideal spot to top up on fuel and supplies for further travel.



Tattersalls Hotel in Winton is the best pub in town, bar none.



ironbark across the plains, with stands of Mitchell grass covering the ground.

George Cragg found the first opal in the area back in 1888 and a few years later the first mine was sunk. At this time a piece almost three metres long was found here, shaped like a section of pipe. By 1900 there were more than 600 people living here and Opalton was known for the quality and quantity of its precious rock. Today the town has dwindled to a handful of tough men and women who are still searching for 'that' payload. Opalton is also known for its boulder opal, which forms in an egg-like shape; over time minerals pass through this shape to form an opal colour on the inside.

Other than a few shanty shacks and old relics here and there, Opalton doesn't look like much these days, and that's the way locals like it; hidden away and hard to find. Camping is at the Opalton bush camp, where for a measly \$3 a night you can set up camp, use the bush



Welcome sign at Opalton pretty much sums up what you'll find in the small locality.



kitchen and, if you light up the old donkey heater, enjoy a hot shower. We found that if there are a few campers around everybody pitches in to collect wood and take turns in lighting up the boiler.

Scratching around on other people's property is normally deemed inappropriate around these areas, but most mornings a local will come down to the bush camping area to get a group together for a free tour around the old mines to show how they work, impart the history of the area, show off some old camps and take you to places where you can scratch around for opal. You'll also see where the old town used to be situated, some unique buildings, and the areas in which the current miners are only allowed to use hand tools (no large-scale machinery). Today the 'old town' is just a few relics and signs that point out where things used to be, like the general store, the school, the butcher shop and the miners' houses.

To get here today takes a good two hours of driving, but getting here 130 years ago must have been one hell of an adventure, walking into what would seem like the middle of nowhere. It's a bloody harsh environment around Opalton, where months go by with no rainfall and summer temperatures often get towards the 50°C mark. Once a week the town's 25 or so residents gather at the bush camp for the weekly mail run and a general get-together, as most of the miners' camps are scattered over 100km². It's a close-knit community and, even though they might not catch up for more than a week, all the

The route is achievable with a camper trailer, just don't expect it to be easy.



locals still seem to know what's going on around the place. The Queensland department of mines has set aside a few acres behind the camping area where anyone can noodle (look for rocks) or fossick. The best way is to take a spray bottle of water and spray the rocks to see if they produce any colour.

After spending a few days in town and wanting to check out the other highlights of the Dinosaur Trail we headed farther south towards Opalton Creek, which is the only spot in the area where the use of heavy-duty machinery is permitted in the hunt for opal. Here, huge bulldozers carve away at hills and take the tops off mountains looking for bucket-loads of colour, but this comes with high operating costs. The road south is a prettier one than the road coming in to Opalton, with wide creek crossings and huge white gums lining the creek, along with what seems like millions of red and white termite mounds

IT'S A BLOODY HARSH ENVIRONMENT AROUND OPALTON, WHERE MONTHS GO BY WITH NO RAINFALL AND TEMPERATURES OFTEN REACHING THE 50°C MARK



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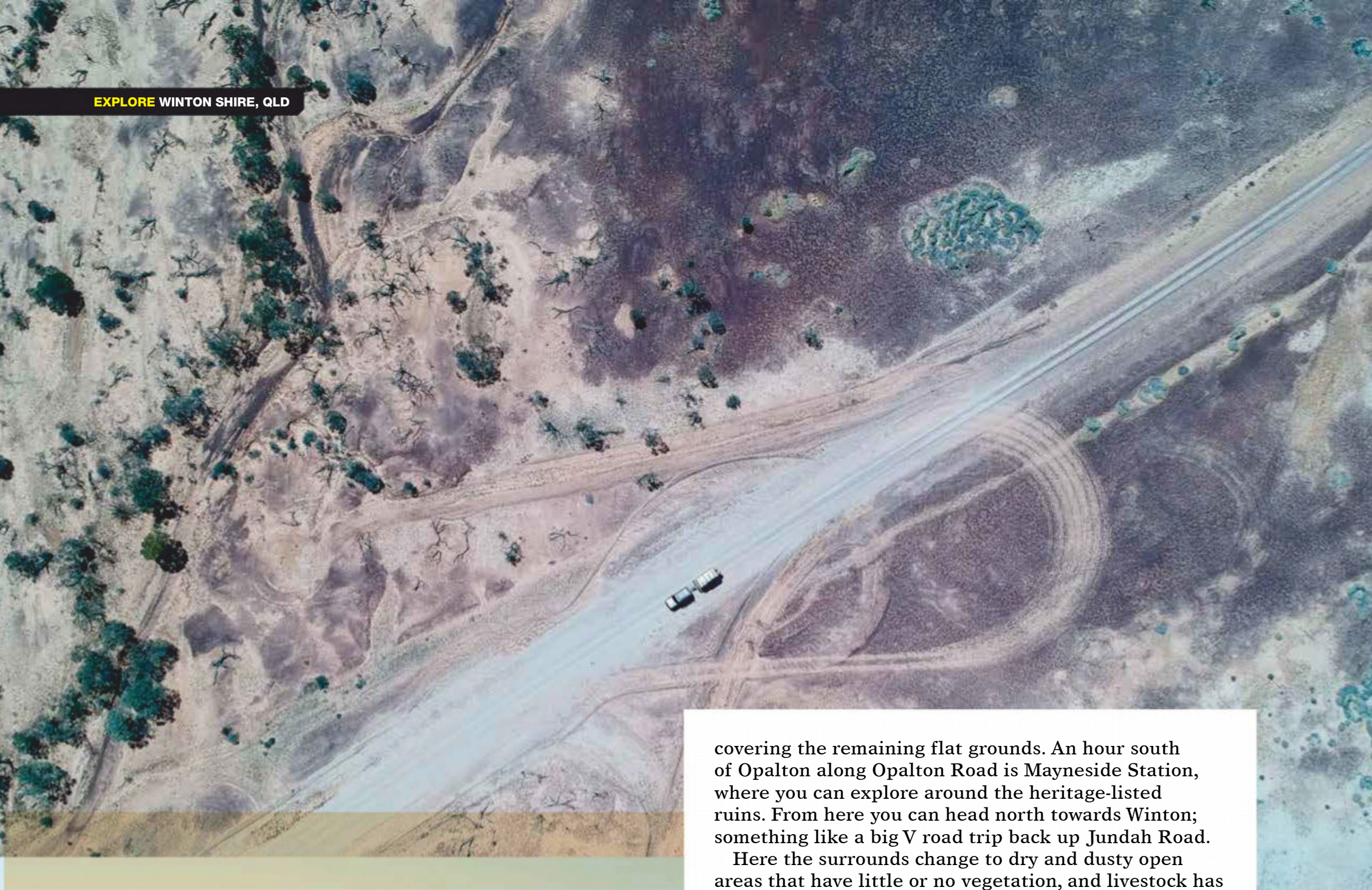
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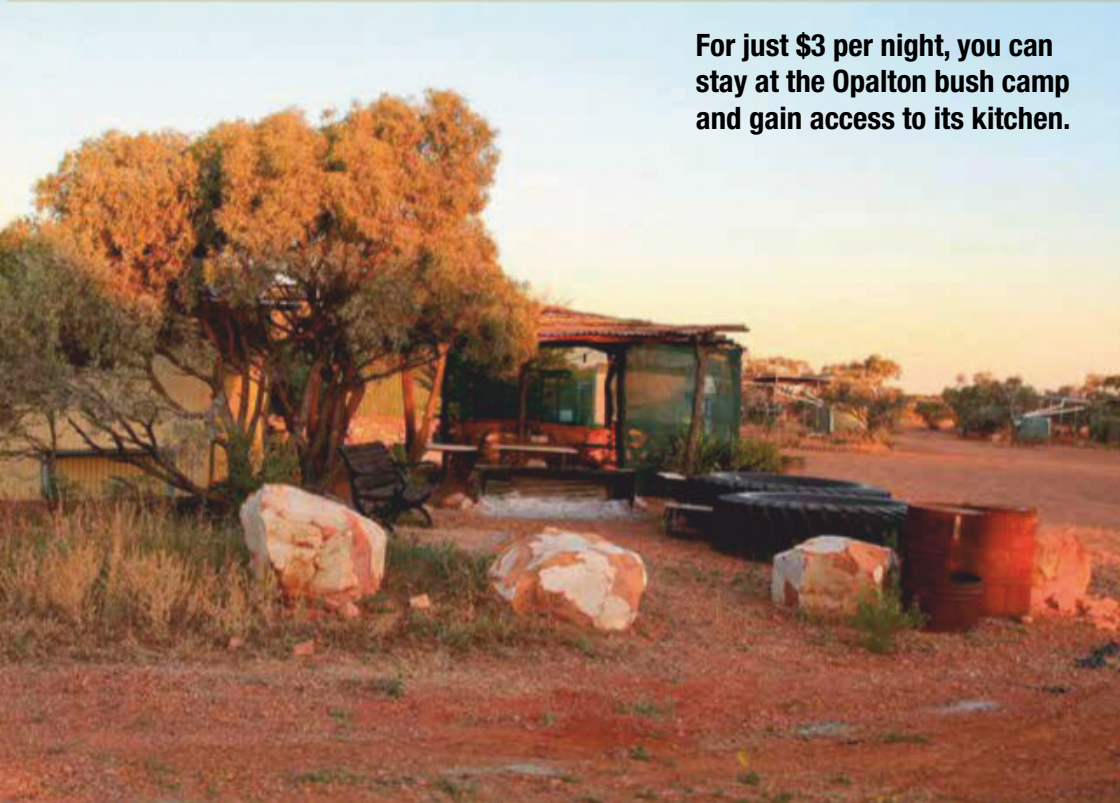
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For just \$3 per night, you can stay at the Opalton bush camp and gain access to its kitchen.



covering the remaining flat grounds. An hour south of Opalton along Opalton Road is Mayneside Station, where you can explore around the heritage-listed ruins. From here you can head north towards Winton; something like a big V road trip back up Jundah Road.

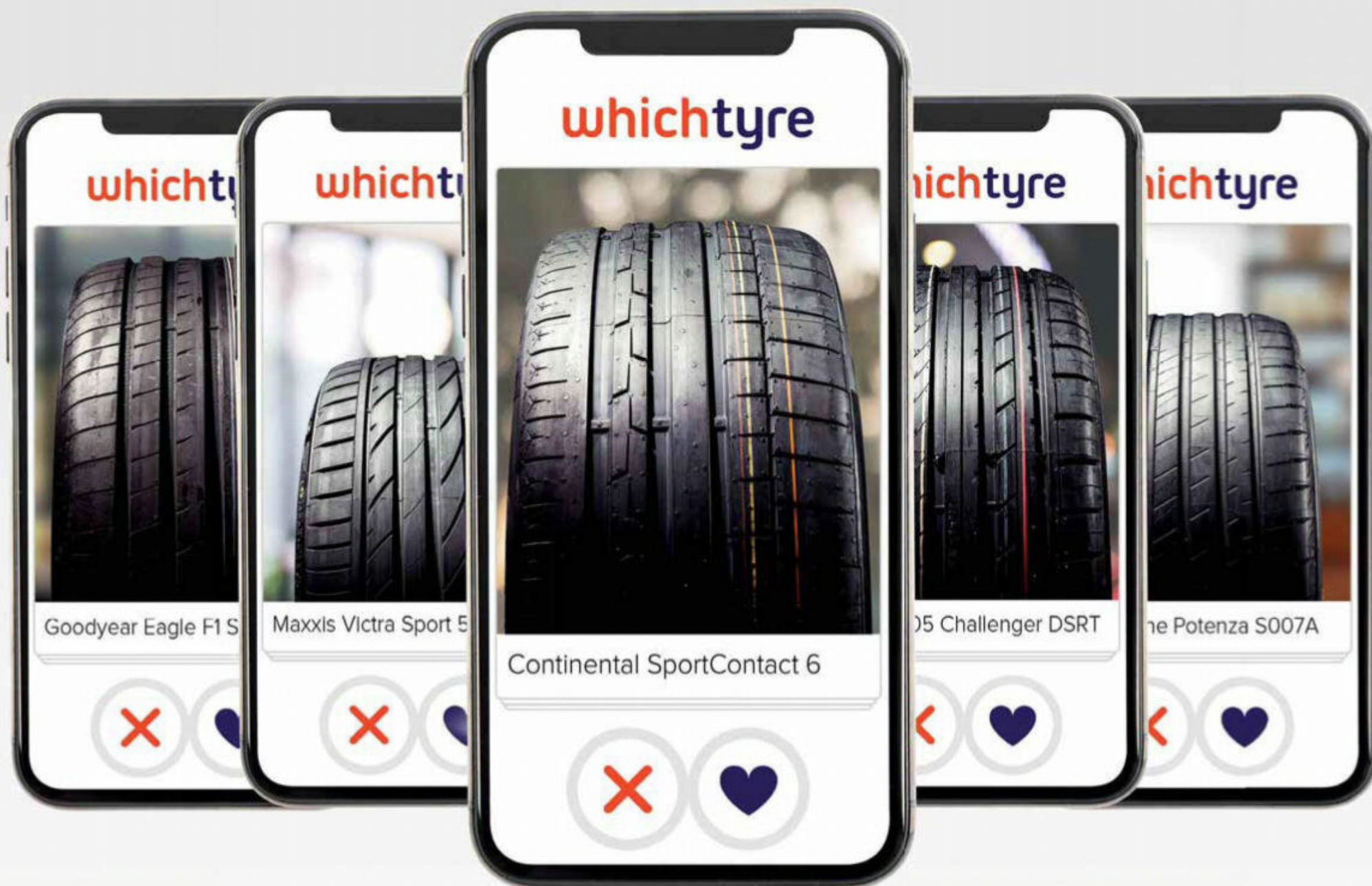
Here the surrounds change to dry and dusty open areas that have little or no vegetation, and livestock has been held here over the years. If you run a good quality GPS, keep an eye out for where you pass over the Tropic of Capricorn; there are no signs on the road, but it's a bit of a quirky spot to stop for a quick snap. For the next hours' drive, Jundah Road remains flat and seems like another never-ending dirt road where the only colour around is red gibber rock under hardened mulga trees. Animal life out here is sporadic depending on the seasons, and we didn't see any 'roos and only a few crows along the way. After a while you start to happen upon a few larger jump-up sections where moisture gathers and the landscape changes to taller trees and what seems like tall grasses including Mitchell grass, which is high in nutrition for livestock.

Lark Quarry Dinosaur Trackways is located on this

Wide dirt roads are the norm when travelling in and around Opalton, from Winton.



It's a match!



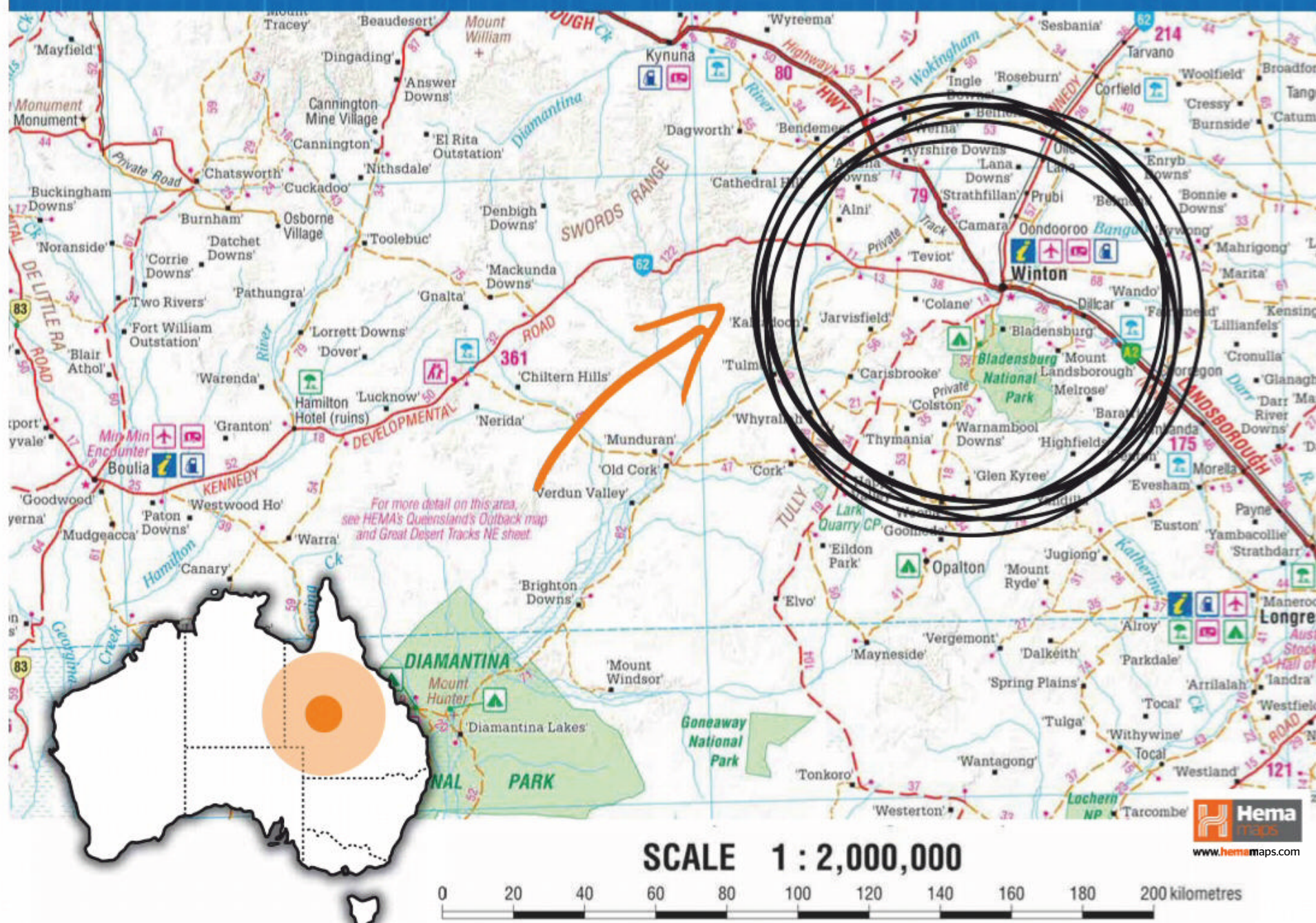
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The remote locality of Opalton has an airstrip, for those keen to get in and out in a hurry.

higher ground and is only a few miles off the main road. This is one place that needs to be on your must-see list, as it's the only place in Australia where evidence of a dinosaur stampede has been discovered. It's a commercialised place where you can buy food, coffee and cheap souvenirs. Once inside there's a short video on how scientists think the stampede occurred, and then you're taken inside a specially built shed where you can view the footprints in the dried mud. Volunteers run the show out here and share a wealth of information on this area and anything to do with the stampede. This is a great place for those with an interest in Australia's prehistoric past, when mega-monsters walked the earth back in Gondwana times.

Heading out of Lark Quarry up to Winton involves another two hours of rough, undulating outback roads, where you'll need to find your own comfortable speed after dropping some air from your tyres. The entire trip is doable with a camper trailer, but you'll need to be prepared for a good 400km of outback roads that rarely see any maintenance. **44**

WINTON SHIRE, QUEENSLAND



IWG-75

Nissan Patrol ZD30DDTi 7PSI

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WORDS & PHOTOS DICK EUSSEN

BUSH CAMPING CAN BE A LOT OF FUN, SO LONG AS YOU KNOW WHAT YOU'RE DOING. DICK EUSSEN LEARNED THIS THE HARD WAY, THROUGH YEARS OF TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS.





1



2



3

1. Take a bucket when the only running water is in streams.
2. Muddies cooked in coals, the Aboriginal way. Top tucker.
3. Allan Webb at home in the bush.



SOMETIMES, bad things happen on trips, like several years ago when we pulled up at camp and discovered our 20-litre drinking water container had sprung a leak. It was empty and the only water available to us was from a nearby waterhole, quarter-full of mud and covered in scum from cow crap. We knew charcoal was used for filtering, so we burned some big logs and piled up a heap of charcoal, which we tipped into a bucket partly filled with the crappy water and later strained the water through a bed sheath. The mud had settled, but the taste of the water was not that great, even after boiling it for five minutes. Still, it was okay for cooking vegetables and making tea, so long as you didn't mind your food tasting like charcoal. These days I just make sure I carry two water containers.

In those early days we didn't have ice and Eskys, so taking cold beer bush was not an option. A bottle of OP Bundy rum, a pannikin and a water bag hung from the bullbar served us well. A canvas water bag keeps water

reasonably cool, but you had to get used to the taste of the bag. We used to take a few bottles of beer which could be kept cool by putting them in a potato sack and sinking it into a deep waterhole at the end of a rope. That worked very well until, on one trip, a croc ripped the bag open and spilled the beer out. No one was game to dive in after it. That sort of stuff makes modern men cry, but there were no crying sports stars about in those days; men didn't cry even over spilt beer, though I did notice some damp eyes...

Another beer-cooling method was to put the bottles in petrol. That cooled them down quickly, but you had to wash the petrol smell off before you could drink it. It was not very safe for smokers, however, especially if they sported a beard.

LOVE CAMPING

I HAVE been caught out by flooding during unseasonal storms many times, but during one unforgettable trip we had to erect our tents in the middle of a black soil road

**WE USED TO KEEP BEER
COOL BY PUTTING THEM IN A
POTATO SACK AND SINKING
THEM IN A WATERHOLE ...
UNTIL A CROC RIPPED THE
BAG OPEN ON ONE TRIP**



after being trapped between two flooded creeks, south of Burketown, Queensland. There were three vehicles in the party and we lived in the rain and mud for four days before our tyres found traction and the creeks dropped low enough to cross. I invested in a set of mud chains after that and used them on a regular basis. Mud does little for relationships, and one bloke in the party got a bit snappy until someone sat him on his backside in the gooey stuff.

Another bloke had his wife along and at the end of the ordeal he reckoned he could now only love a woman who would sleep in the mud with him, eat tin-can rations and drink warm beer and OP rum. This couple recently celebrated their 54th wedding anniversary, so the formula worked.

Campers are subjected to many ordeals: breakdowns, crocodile attacks, snake and insect bites, extreme cold and hot days, rain and flood, accidents, poor food, bad choice of company, no beer, and various other hazards and hassles. But we keep on going back because we love the bush and driving to wilderness places with our fourbies, to fish, hunt, prospect or hike. I have lived and loved through all of the above and still haven't learned.

I must admit, however, that things are different nowadays and I have many comforts that were unheard of in days gone by. The portable car fridge comes to mind, allowing you to have fresh food and, of course, cold beer. I love a cold beer or two after a hot day in the bush or on the water. It's a natural thing to do, especially in company of a few good mates when reliving the day's events and sharing lies and jokes.

OUTDOOR FOOD AND COMFORT

IT'S MARVELLOUS how a simple meal like a piece of barbecued steak or sausage and an onion on a slice of buttered bread can taste when you're out in the bush, but try serving something this basic up for dinner at home and see how it goes down with the family.

Good food is directly linked to enjoyment because when people are active and do things they generally don't do at home, they tend to eat and drink more. Camping in the bush is not enjoyable if the food is bad, because having good food is paramount – better still if someone can actually cook it. We once lived on fish and wild pigs for 10 days because someone had left all the cold-store food – steaks, bacon, eggs and more – at home in the fridge. On another trip we had no matches or lighters between three vehicles (all diesels) because all were non-smokers, so we spent much of our time rubbing sticks together trying to get a fire going.

Sometimes you have rotten luck like the time we struck really bad corrugations on a Cape York trip. We had several cartons of XXXX in the tray-back and by the time we reached our destination we discovered that all but a handful had sprung leaks from rubbing together. These days I wrap beer cans in newspaper if they are loose.

On another trip, while filming several 4WD segments for the show *Escape with ET*, the fridge door on the camper trailer had not been pinned and it jarred open. This wasn't noticed until the end of the day and by this time \$300 worth of meat and cold goods had gone off. At least the crows, kite hawks and dingoes were well fed.

BEING ISOLATED IN THE BUSH MEANS YOU DON'T HAVE TO ROUGH IT ANYMORE. EATING TINNED FOOD IS FOR LAZY CAMPERS AND THOSE WHO CAN'T COOK

Camp cooking is five-star when the sun sets over a wonderful river.

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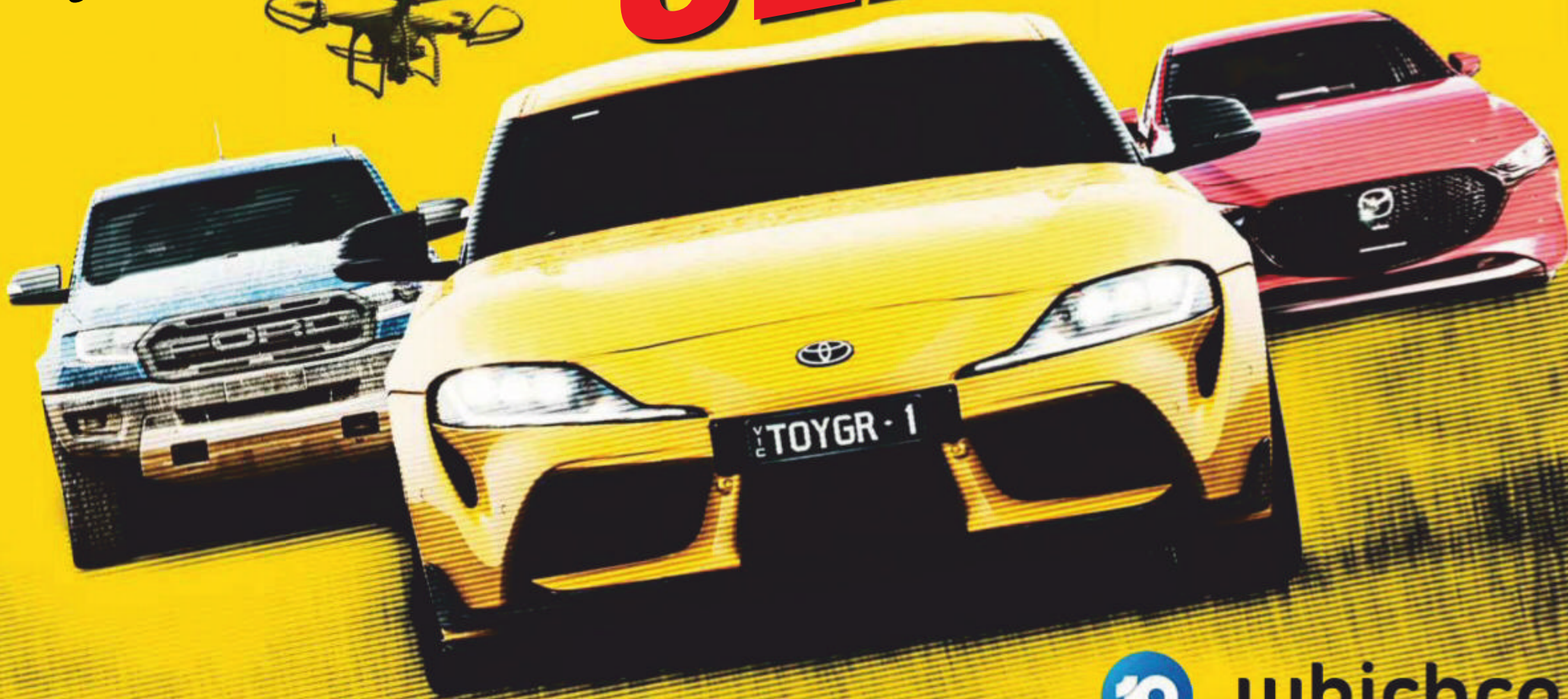
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Miss out on a good night's sleep and you get cranky. On one fishing trip we all left our tent screens and weather flaps open for better airflow so they'd be cool when we returned, but a late wet-season thunderstorm beat us back to camp. In fact, it was a good thing we weren't there when the storm hit because half the camp had blown away; my tent fly was in the river and the tree to which it had been tied was struck by lightning. Of course, everything was wet, including our bedding. That was one miserable night I'd like to forget.

Getting wet from torrential tropical downpours is an occupational hazard when fishing and I have learnt to keep a couple of light ponchos with my life jackets – just in case. Another resides in my Can-Am quad after I got caught out in a heavy shower one day and almost froze to death on the ride home. Ironically, I've never been caught out in the rain since I stored the ponchos in the boat and in the quad.

1. You can carry a lot of light camping gear in your tinnie.
2. The author with a nice threadie. Fish are an important part of camp food.



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AVOIDING THE PITFALLS

I USED to spend much of my time promoting guided safari hunting and fishing operations across the tropics. These guys supply everything, including great food and accommodation. The lodges and camps are generally full of good people with similar interests and the atmosphere and mateship is often awesome – or boring when the rich talk rubbish about stock markets, good wine, cheese, bad women and missed putts on the golf course! But in the last few years I have gone back to basics by loading the Hilux and heading out to remote places where I camp and fish in the good company of my own choice. We share the cooking and other camp duties and, in general, are carefree in what we do.


Those who join us in other vehicles all have a role. We have a backyard barbie beforehand and work out who will do the shopping for the trip, as we all share the same camp-cooking facilities and kitchen. Money is collected and handed to the person who does the groceries, while someone else is responsible for the cooking gas, stove, camp kitchen, generator, shower room, utensils and the like, because there is no sense in doubling up on stuff in another vehicle when it can be shared by all. It is not rocket science to share and allocate duties and gear.

1. Natalie Peacock in a comfortable Drifta bush kitchen.
2. The 30-second Oztents are ideal for bush camping.
3. Neale and Margaret Ellis enjoy a five-star bush dinner.

EAT WELL

BREAKFAST is ignored by some people, while others eat a full brekky of bacon, eggs and toast, washed down with coffee or tea. Generally, lunches are prepared in camp by someone not engaged in cooking duties. When we fish, we cook fresh fillets on a small portable butane gas cooker in a frypan – in the boat – for lunch. Fish fillets, fried in a little butter, with an egg, onion and tomato slices, placed between slices of buttered bread, makes for a great lunch, especially on a cool day.

Dinner can be barbecued steaks, a camp-oven roast, fish of the day, or whatever takes your fancy, because modern car fridges and iceboxes allow us to take cold goods into the bush for extended periods. Being isolated in the bush, or simply by distance, means – unlike the old days – you don't have to rough it anymore. Eating dried or tinned food is for lazy campers and for those who can't cook.

I learned long ago that taking the rough out of roughing is commonsense. These days I don't have to drink muddy water because I have a LifeSaver Jerrycan and cold beer in my Engel fridge/freezer. Man, you gotta love modern camping... 



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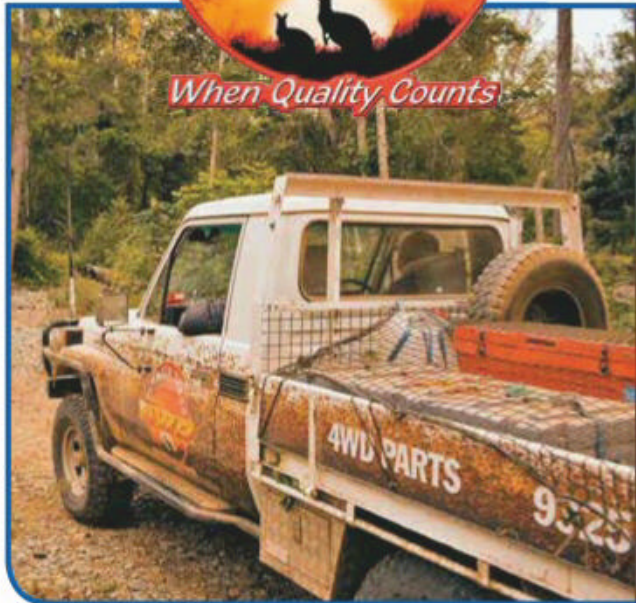
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THIS MONTH WE TALK TO BRENT HUTCHINSON FROM TERRAIN TAMER



Describe your business?

We are the 4WD parts people, with a range that has been built up over 50 years of design, field testing, metallurgy testing, and manufacturing.

Tell us some of the history of your company?

We began in the 1960's and many of our customers were tour operators that would travel from Melbourne up through the red centre and back, following tracks like Burke & Wills or where the Stuart Highway now runs or into the Simpson Desert. They would often return having broken, damaged or weakened parts and would then ask our team to design or source a stronger part so their next tour could go on without disruption. Gradually, part by part, over 50 years, this has resulted in the range Terrain Tamer now offers. Essentially, Terrain Tamer is formed by parts that will keep you running – right through the Gearbox, transfer case, CV joints, filters, suspension, bearing kits, brake, clutch and thousands of other parts that make up any LandCruiser, Hilux, Patrol, Triton, Navara or D-Max.

Where is the company at now?

We're in a period of large global expansion and are fortunate to have 4 international branches that have grown over time. We are sold into over 80 countries around the world and our range continues to grow. Everything we do still continues on from that original promise of parts that will get you home - that same philosophy that got the tour operators and their Bedford 4WDs back safely in the 1960's still runs through the company's purpose today.

Unique Selling Point:

Our experience means a lot because we've spent 50 years learning lessons. We see some manufacturers making mistakes today that we learned from decades ago. From a quality aspect, this is a testament to the range, and it also helps us with innovation, occasionally bringing old ideas to address new problems. Out of 130 staff we have 20 who have been here over 20 years, so our parts interpreting skills are unmatched. We have a huge knowledge base, which is crucial in this industry to ensure that not only the best quality part but also the right part is delivered at the right time.

2 Words about Product or Service?

Passionate & Pioneering.

What makes you different from your Competition?

We don't really have a direct competitor, because we cover such a wide range. If anything, it would be the genuine dealers like Toyota or Nissan, but they are also some of our best customers. Simply, and almost by accident, the unique nature of the way Terrain Tamer has been built over 50 years makes it very hard for someone new to come into the industry to follow our path. It would take them 50 years to get where we are today, and by then we'd be 50 years ahead.

What products are in development now?

Interestingly, a lot of our knowledge base on parts is now being sought after by aid vehicles around the world. These are vehicles with different requirements, and

certainly much of the R&D that we've poured into our current range applies, but it needs a whole new way of thinking. These are vehicles that are really heavy, but there are a lot of benefits in designing for these vehicles, and it means we'll also be able to provide customers here in Australia with some really heavy duty products and essentially also solve a lot of problems here for non-aid or non-military vehicles.

Who uses your products?

Those who care for their 4WD. To elaborate further, those who own a work horse of a vehicle - clearly mining is important, as is farming, fleets of vehicles, emergency services and of course the recreational 4WDriver.

What's your greatest achievement?

In an automotive industry that has seen a lot of recent consolidation, we're very proud to still be 100% Australian and family owned by the original founder, taking this hard earned knowledge base and exporting it all around the world through Terrain Tamer. We get a kick out of leading the field in industries around the world, beyond just the Australian market, and to be the current winner of an Australian Automotive Aftermarket Association Innovation Award is also a huge badge of honor.



GEAR

PRODUCT TESTS & NEW STUFF



IRONMAN 4X4 SUZUKI JIMNY BULLBARS

Ironman 4x4 has launched two new bullbars to suit the Suzuki Jimny: the Special and the Commercial Deluxe. Both bars have been developed using 3D scan technology to ensure an accurate fit, and they're manufactured from SPHC oil and pickled steel for maximum strength and corrosion resistance and feature 360-degree robotic welds. They are also airbag compatible and ADR compliant, and they can be equipped with a winch using a unique mounting cradle. They are finished with a textured matte powder coat, include high-lift jack points and LED park/indicator lights, and have provision for fitment of factory fog lights/DRLs, headlight washers and antennas. The Commercial Deluxe has a traditional full-loop design, while the Special has a smaller single loop design for the fitment of driving lights or a light bar.

RRP: \$1615

Website: www.ironman4x4.com



PROVENT OIL SEPARATOR KIT

The Direction-Plus ProVent system has been designed to separate and redirect oil and air from blow-by gas produced from within a diesel engine's crankcase. The kit is claimed to protect diesel engines by substantially reducing the amount of oil entering the engine from blow-by gas in the crankcase ventilation system, which also provides the option of returning the oil back to the sump. Direction-Plus offers a wide range of ProVent Oil Separator Kits to specifically suit different vehicles.

RRP: From \$330

Website: www.direction-plus.com



myCOOLMAN 'THE TRANSPORTER' 30L FRIDGE/FREEZER

The Transporter from myCOOLMAN is ideally suited to smaller vehicles or shorter trips thanks to its compact external dimensions, yet it can still store up to 32 330ml cans. The single-zone fridge is powered by a 12/24V compressor and has a digital control system with an easy-to-read display. Features include a multi-level compartment with a deep section for tall bottles, an adjustable storage basket, a USB port and charger with 3000mA output, an LED interior light, two built-in bottle openers, and recessed carry handles that double as tough tie-down points. The fridge can be controlled and monitored using a Bluetooth-compatible smartphone with myCOOLMAN's free Apple/Android app. Extras include an insulated cover (\$109) and myCOOLMAN's magnetically attached Power Pack (\$399) that can run the fridge for up to 18 hours.

RRP: \$995

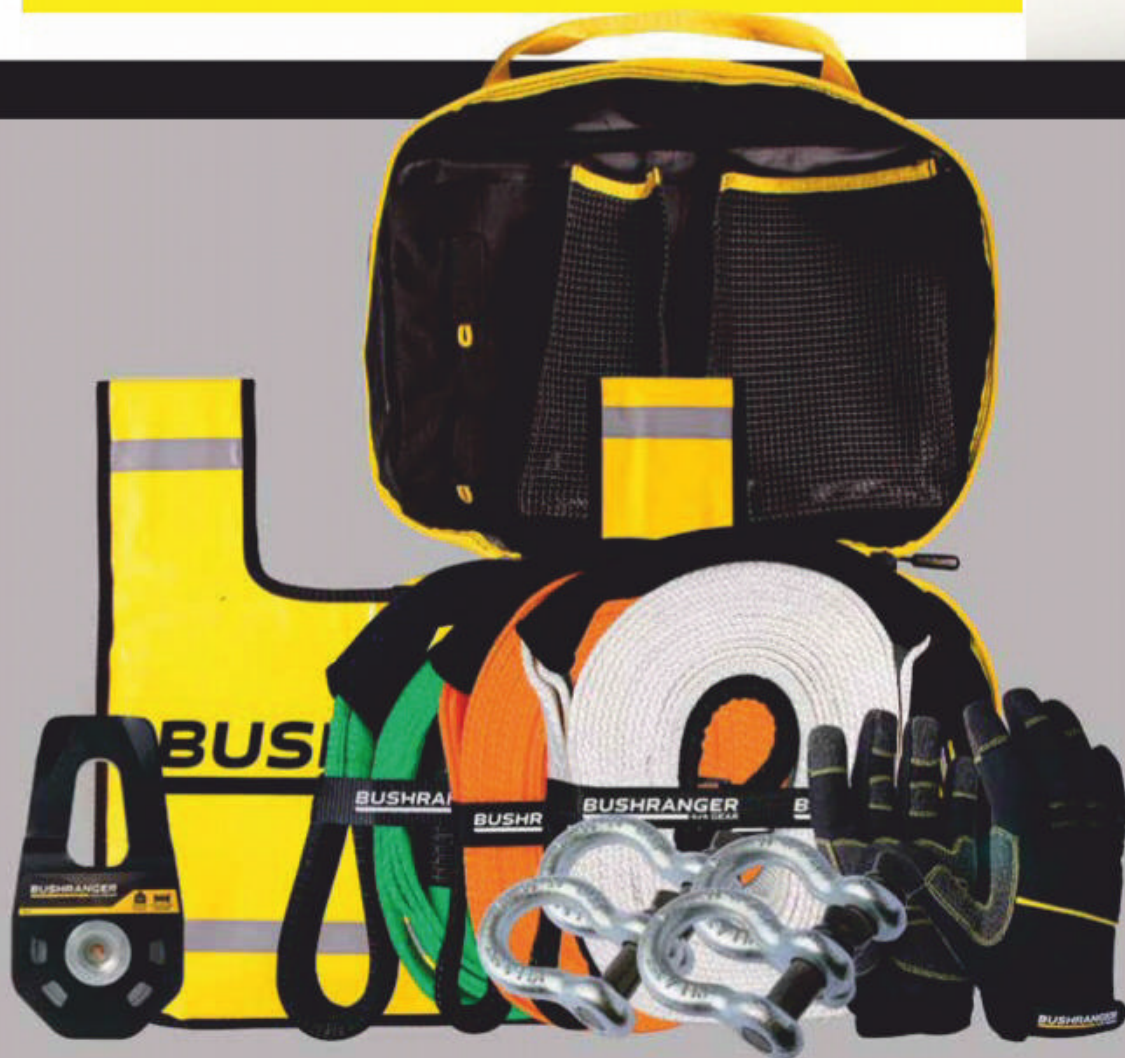
Website: www.mycoolman.com.au

TAG PORTABLE JUMP-STARTER & MULTIFUNCTION CHARGER

Perfect for those moments when you turn the key and your starter motor responds with little more than a tick, the TAG Portable Jump-Starter & Multifunction Charger can be easily stowed in your vehicle to get you out of trouble in case of a flat battery or a dead mobile phone. The device is a 12,000mAh 12V battery jump-starter that can also be used to recharge mobile devices using any one of the various charging options, which include Wireless Qi charging, USB (5/9V Output), 16V DC output and USB-C quick-charge input. The TAG unit is claimed to be suitable for jumpstarting petrol engines up to 8.0L capacity and diesel engines up to 4.5L, and it's supplied in a hard-shell carry case with 12V jump-starter clamps, a 4-in-1 USB charge cable, a DC power cable, a charging cable and plug, a ciggy-lighter adapter and a built-in torch. It's covered by a 12-month warranty.

RRP: \$169

Website: www.tagtowbars.com.au



BUSHRANGER 4X4 RECOVERY GEAR

Bushranger 4x4 Gear has updated its range of recovery equipment following on from the mandatory standards update of December 2019, which relates to the inclusion of specific safety labelling on recovery straps and related packaging. The new range of Bushranger recovery gear has been designed and engineered to the highest standards and tested in both a NATA-accredited laboratory and in real off-road conditions. The up-to-date range of Bushranger recovery gear consists snatch straps, winch extension strap, tree trunk protector, snatch block, recovery gloves, and snatch and recovery kits. Bushranger's additional recovery equipment includes the Recovery REVO Winch, recovery damper, bow shackles, recovery hitch, X-Jack, exhaust jack and X-Trax. Snatch straps start at \$69 (8000kg) while snatch recovery kits start at \$139 (8000kg snatch strap, two bow shackles, gloves and recovery bag).

RRP: From \$69

Website: bushranger.com.au

RACKSBRAX HD HITCH

The quick-release RacksBrax HD Hitch means pull-out awnings and conduit tubes can be locked on or taken off roof racks in less than 10 seconds, resulting in improved vehicle fuel consumption and reduced effects of weather on awnings. The addition of a garage wall-mounted RacksBrax HD Hitch also allows tradies and off-road enthusiasts to quickly swap between roof rack-mounted awnings and conduit tubes, or to simply store these items away from the elements whilst keeping them easily accessible for the next work trip or recreational adventure. The sleek, rattle-free RacksBrax HD Hitch with a built-in lock has been designed to fit almost all existing roof-rack-mounted pull-out awnings and conduit tube brackets. The RacksBrax HD Hitch is manufactured in Australia.

RRP: \$135

Website: www.racksbrax.com

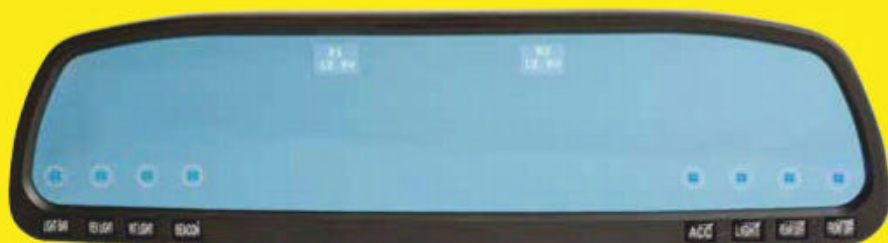


PROJECTA CHARGE N' MAINTAIN CHARGERS

Projecta has updated its Charge N' Maintain battery chargers by introducing new features across four new models. The 'smart chargers' have switchable charging stages, allowing them to regulate load and optimise charging, depending on the battery's level of charge and stopping when full charge is reached. Instead of a heavy transformer, the chargers feature 'switch mode' tech to convert 240V AC to 12V DC, so they are light, compact and portable. Another feature includes spark-free operation.

RRP: From \$55 (800mAh model)

Website: www.projecta.com.au



THUNDER TOUCH SWITCH MIRROR

The Touch Switch Mirror from Thunder Auto allows you to monitor two batteries and control up to eight 15A accessories via a built-in touchpad, negating the need to fit separate switches for different accessories throughout the vehicle cabin. The mirror is supplied with a three-metre cable that leads to a control box into which accessories can be connected, allowing it to be located in a convenient, out-of-sight location. The Touch Switch Mirror is then clipped over the vehicle's standard rear-view mirror, resolving the issue of not having enough blanks for all of your accessories. The Touch Switch Mirror features reverse polarity protection, overvoltage and overcurrent protection, and is supplied with 24 different accessory labels to suit common applications.

RRP: \$250

Website: www.thunderauto.com.au



MSA 4X4 WINCH ROPE PROTECTOR

You probably cringe every time your expensive winch rope drags over abrasive rocks or snags on sharp obstacles, but you can comprehensively protect it by fitting an MSA 4X4 Winch Rope Protector. Made from heavy-duty 1680 denier Oxford Nylon, it has been specifically designed to wrap around winch ropes. It's fastened in place using four heavy-duty Velcro strips and features reflective tape strips for increased visibility. There are two handles so you can easily slide it up and down the rope to position it where it will be most effective, and its quick-fit design means it can be installed and removed in seconds. When you're finished with it, pop it back into the included storage bag.

RRP: \$79

Website: msa4x4.com.au

Finally it's easy to keep an eye on things when you travel.

Being on the road is great...and now it's even easier with the RedVision Total Vehicle Management System from REDARC. The award-winning RedVision introduces a new level of automation to the caravanning and 4WD industries. It brings information and control right to your fingertips.

Switch your lights, fridge, air compressor, inverter and more on or off, using the in-vehicle mounted display or handy app on your phone. RedVision even gives you information on water levels, temperatures and, when paired with a 'Manager' Battery Management System, you also get instant feedback on your auxiliary battery and electrical system.

RedVision from REDARC is so clever you'll wonder how you managed without it.

Visit redarc.com.au/redvision for more information.



ARB STRETCHER

With ARB's new Stretcher you'll never again have to worry about finding a completely flat or soft place to set up your swag. The stretcher has been designed to provide instant comfort when settling into camp as it's quick-fold design makes it fast and easy to set up and pack away, while keeping you and your swag off the ground. Rated to support up to 150kg, the stretcher comes standard with a boot bag, and will be available in ARB stores and stockists from March 2020.

RRP: \$145 (Australian East Coast Metro)

Website: www.arb.com.au



DOMETIC CFX3 PORTABLE FRIDGE/FREEZERS

Dometic's CFX3 Portable Fridge/Freezers feature an enhanced user interface, easy-to-open latches, heavy-duty yet lightweight construction, improved LED lights, and solid anchors to secure the unit. Using Variable Motor Speed Optimisation (VMSO3) tech, the CFX3 range is said to provide optimal compressor speed and energy efficiency for lower power consumption and longer operating times. The CFX3 range now offers Bluetooth and Wi-Fi remote-control functionality, a revised weatherproof control panel and more powerful USB outlets. The CFX3 55IM model even features a first-of-its-kind icemaker with ice trays.

RRP: \$1199 (35); \$1299 (45); \$1449 (55); \$1599 (55IM); \$1799 (75); \$1899 (95)

Website: www.dometic.com

MAXTRAX HITCH 50

The MaxTrax Hitch 50 is available now. Designed specifically for use with soft shackles, the Hitch 50 is precision-machined from 6061 billet aluminium and features an anodised finish for corrosion protection. The design allows for multidirectional pull in both vertical and horizontal axes and the hitch fits all standard 50mm (two-inch) hitch receivers. It has a working load limit of 8800kg and a destructive test break load of 44,000kg.

RRP: \$249

Website: www.maxtrax.com.au



AIR FEEDS THE HORSES



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And now you can get it with a K&N® high-flow air filter, designed to increase horsepower with up to 50% more airflow. Whether your 4X4 is brand new or has some kilometers on it, get a K&N filter today, spend five minutes under the hood and you're good to go.

KNFILTERS.COM.AU





COMPACT COOLING

A COMPACT PORTABLE FRIDGE PACKED WITH FEATURES.

THERE'S a hell of a lot of portable fridge options these days and while some manufacturers persist with old-school designs and continue to trade on their reputations, newer entrants to the market are shaking things up with more innovative designs and clever features.

One of the newer brands around is myCOOLMAN, and its fridges certainly fall into the 'innovative design and clever features' category. There are nine fridges in the myCOOLMAN line-up, ranging in capacity from 30L to 105L, and it's the compact 30L model that I've been running for the past couple of months.

Called The Transporter, this 30L fridge is ideally suited to use in smaller 4x4 wagons, or for shorter trips such as weekend escapes with just a couple of people. The fridge's small footprint (610mm x 340mm) means it doesn't take up too much room inside the back of a small 4x4, and it's relatively low height (424mm) means the lid will open completely in the back of a vehicle, and you don't have to reach up and over too far to access fridge contents.

It's also light at just 17.5kg, making it easy to lift into and out of the back of a vehicle, even when loaded up with food and drinks. The fridge also has big, sturdy handles that double as tie-down points, and these fold flush when not in use.

The fridge has a sturdy plastic cabinet and removable lid, and a section on each side that magnets can stick to (for the optional

Power Pack), as well as reinforced panels on each corner. With a flush-mount control panel, flush lid release, and handy recessed bottle openers at each end, there's nothing 'sticking out' that could otherwise get caught on something such as vehicle trim or luggage.

The 240V AC and 12V DC inputs at the front of the fridge are easy to access, and there's an additional 12V DC input at the other end, which is very convenient depending on where your vehicle's 12V power supply is. There's also a handy USB power outlet for charging phones and other devices.

The flipside of having small external dimensions is the 30L fridge's small interior cabinet. It has a split-level design, essentially to make space for the compressor, and in total it will hold up to 32 x 330ml cans. The fridge is supplied with removable baskets that allow you to keep food and drinks separate, and a fold-up section on the top basket means you can stand a couple of larger soft-drink or wine bottles upright. Other features include an interior LED light and a drain plug to aid cabinet cleaning.

The fridge operation is straightforward. There's an on/off button, a turbo button (for faster cooldown) and up and down buttons to set the temperature. The digital display can show set temperature or cabinet temperature, and the user can set the low-voltage cutout point that best suits their requirements.

On test the myCOOLMAN 30L had no problems keeping food



and drinks cold even on hot days, it cooled down from room temperature quickly with the turbo function engaged, and it's remarkably quiet in operation. You can monitor and set cabinet temperature from a mobile device thanks to Bluetooth connectivity – just download the free myCOOLMAN app, scan the code on the side of the fridge and connect. The app is super convenient and easy to use, and extra fridges can be added for those with more than one myCOOLMAN device.

While a 30L fridge won't be for everyone, it's certainly well suited to those with small vehicles. Another benefit is just how portable a fridge like this myCOOLMAN is, not only thanks to its small size but also its light weight and sturdy carry handles; I have swapped it from vehicle to vehicle a number of times, and have also used it away from a vehicle with myCOOLMAN's optional Power Pack.

At \$995, The Transporter 30L is good value for money, and it's covered by a three-year warranty, with five years coverage for the compressor. **4x4**

myCOOLMAN POWER PACK

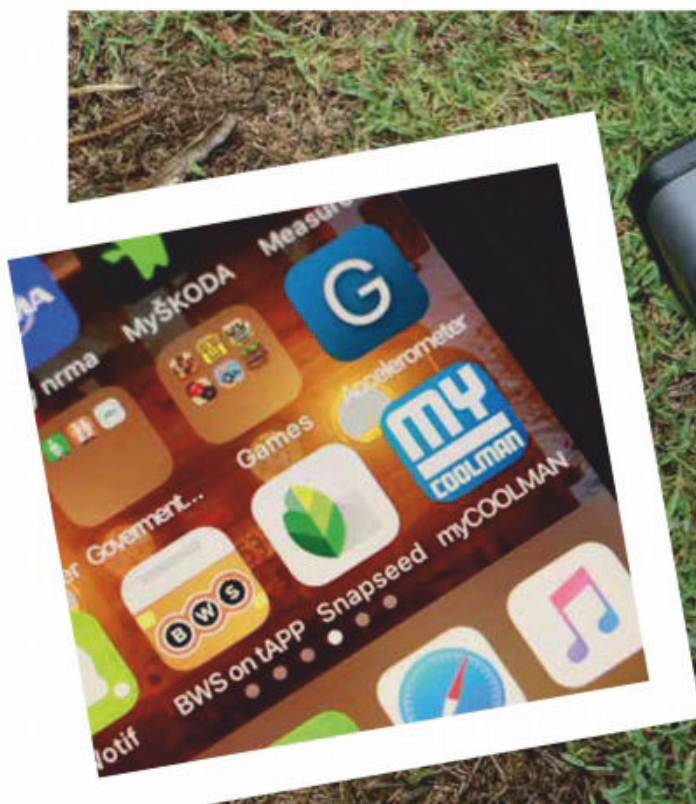
PORTABLE power packs are nothing new but in the past if you wanted one with enough grunt to power a fridge, you'd be looking at a big, heavy device. Thanks to lithium-ion battery tech, the myCOOLMAN Power Pack is not big and heavy, but it still has enough grunt to power The Transporter 30L fridge for up to 18 hours.

The 15amp/h Power Pack weighs 1.65kg and has a magnetic base so it can 'stick' to the side of the fridge. It is supplied with a charging cable and a myCOOLMAN fridge cable, and the latter can be plugged into either of the 30L fridge's 12V DC inputs.

With the Power Pack you can keep your fridge running when it's not connected to your vehicle's power supply, which is ideal when camping where there are bollards, or for when you're drinking at the campfire and you can't be bothered getting up to grab another beverage (yes, first world problems are real). It's also ideal for those who don't have a dual-battery system in their vehicle, and who want to keep their fridge running when the vehicle is turned off.

The Power Pack can be charged from 0 to 100 per cent in five to six hours and has short-circuit protection, over-current protection, over-charging protection, over-discharge protection and over-heat protection. On Christmas Day I ran The Transporter fridge off the power pack for eight hours in the back of a stinking hot wagon and the drinks inside were still icy cold for the shotgun-ride home.

The Power Pack is covered by a 12-month warranty, and it can be used on all myCOOLMAN fridges, with run times dependent on fridge size (105L fridge up to eight hours).



**RATED****AVAILABLE FROM:**www.ironman4x4.com**RRP: \$499****WE SAY:** Convenient and reliable power wherever you need it.

POWER TO THE PEOPLE

NEED TEMPORARY POWER? IRONMAN 4X4 HAS THE ANSWER.

WHEN travelling in our Ford Ranger prior to fitting the Allsafe Mining Vehicles & Equipment (AMVE) custom aluminium canopy with its internal Redarc 12-volt power system and lithium batteries, we still needed an auxiliary 12-volt power source for the ute. This was primarily for powering the fridge which we could run off the factory Ford 12-volt outlets while the car was running, but not overnight with the engine switched off. Without a dual-battery system or any source of auxiliary power, we couldn't risk draining the car's main starter battery by operating accessories off it.

We needed a temporary solution while waiting for the canopy to be built, so we picked up the Portable Power Pack from Ironman 4x4. The PPP is just what it says, supplying portable 12-volt power wherever you need it from in-built 44amp/h battery. It can be charged three ways – either using a 240-volt home power cord, 12-volt power cord or via the solar charge input.

The front of the unit features multiple power outlets comprising a 12-volt cigarette lighter-style plug, 12-volt Merit plug and a USB outlet. The power outlets are protected by individual circuit breakers. There's also a clear display showing the state of charge voltage and the current draw on the unit at any time. This is all housed in a heavy-duty ABS plastic housing with a carry handle. You can remove it from the car altogether to power something like

a fridge in camp, and it can be kept topped up with a solar panel if in use for more than a few days.

We charged the Portable Power Pack using 240-volt before we went away and stowed it securely in the passenger-side rear footwell, where it could easily be plugged into the standard 12-volt socket. Our 12-volt fridge was powered off the car during the day when the engine was running and then, each afternoon when we got in to camp, it was simply a matter of swapping the fridge power from the car to the power pack to run overnight. In the morning the fridge was plugged back in to the car's 12-volt to run all day and the PPP plugged in to another of the Ford's outlets to be charged for the next evening.

With this setup, the power pack served us well, keeping the fridge running 24 hours a day for the length of our trips. The in-built USB was handy for charging phones and head torches while on the road and when the car's USB ports were in use. The power pack comes with charge cords for both 240- and 12-volt charging and is available from Ironman 4x4 stores around the country.

The portable power pack served as a great auxiliary source of 12-volt power when we didn't have an inbuilt system in the car, but we'd consider still carrying one for power use around the campsite and as a back-up. It's a worthwhile consideration for any time you need power when out on the road. **4x4**



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HAWK EYES

WE'VE GIVEN THE BUSHRANGER 4X4 NIGHT HAWKS A RUN ON THE RANGER AND RECKON THEY COME UP TRUMPS.

WHEN we did our LED driving light comparison test last year we were all surprised when the Night Hawks from Bushranger 4x4 Gear came up on top. Nothing against the Bushranger brand but these lights were a relative unknown up against some of the biggest brands in the country.

Fast forward to when we had the AFN bar fitted to our Ranger and we were keen to get a pair of Night Hawks on there to see how they perform in the real world. We were also very interested in Bushranger's VLI wiring system which allows the driver to control the intensity of the lights via an adjustment dial with seven power settings. The VLI harness was not used in the original light comparison test.

The VLI is an electronically switched harness that removes the need for any relays in the system, instead using transistors for switching. It provides a simple plug-and-play harness that automatically senses the vehicle polarity for positive or negatively switched high-beam circuits, removing the need for

any rewiring that can otherwise be required for some vehicles.

The VLI harness comes with a dial, instead of a conventional switch, that offers seven different power settings for the lights. The system also has a soft-start fire-up so that it allows your eyes to adjust to the lights when you switch them on.

I have to admit that I thought the adjustable power setting for the lights would be a bit of a gimmick. I mean, doesn't everybody want their lights at maximum brightness all of the time? To the contrary, I found having the adjustment to be very useful and found myself running the lights in lower power settings more often than expected.

For example, modern LED and HID driving lights seem to be forever getting more powerful and in some situations, too powerful. I find that when driving on country roads that still have road signs on them, the reflection back at you from the signs is almost worse than an oncoming car. This is worse on a winding mountain road where you still want the extra vision afforded by the lights, but there are more signs indicating

curves, corners and turns. Setting the VLI dial in the third or fourth power setting on these roads reduces the glare blasting back to the driver off signs but still gives the advantage of better lighting.

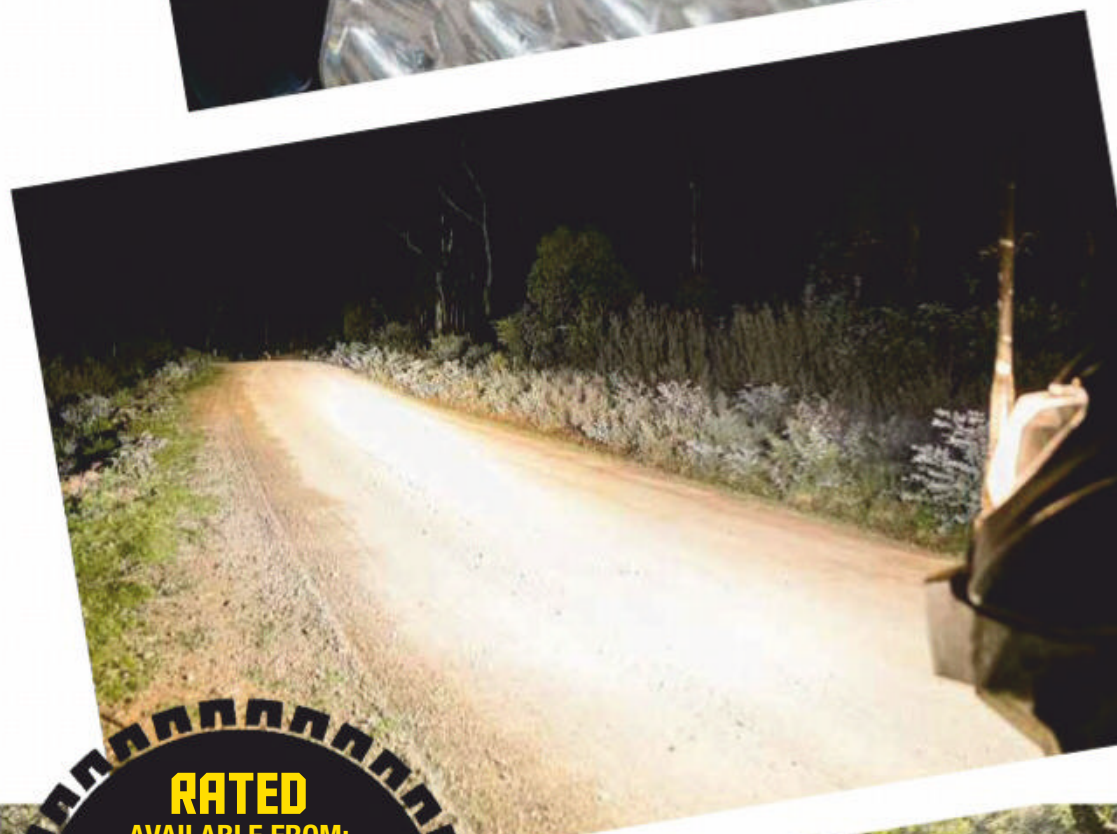
Another time I found it better to reduce the power of the Night Hawks was on country roads where I was getting more than occasional oncoming traffic that required dipping the beams. Even with the 'soft start' feature of the system, the difference between the light thrown by the Night Hawks and the admittedly poor standard Ford main beams is significant, leaving the driver in darkness for the few seconds it takes for your eyes to adjust to the lower light when dipping the beams. Running the Night Hawks in the lower power settings reduces this difference while again still giving improved vision ahead. And it's easy to turn the VLI power-dial up when the oncoming traffic road conditions allow for it.

The Night Hawks pump out plenty of light. They are a nine-inch light utilising 37 Osram LEDs per light for a total of 175-watts each. They run a mild 5700K light temperature which makes them easier on the driver's eyes, but still the variable output of the VLI makes it easier again.

The lights are constructed in a sturdy, finned aluminium housing that offers optimal cooling and the 4mm steel mounting bracket keeps them secure on your bumper and allows for sufficient adjustment. When used with the Bushranger VLI wiring harness, the installation is as easy as can be, with the only drawback being that the VLI power-dial is bigger than a regular switch and you need to find somewhere to mount it. We tucked it up under the HVAC controls where it was out of sight but still relatively easy for the driver to access with his or her left hand.

The Night Hawks come with a pair of polycarbonate protective covers that give you a choice of spread and spot beams. We played around with them and found we preferred to run without the covers on at all, as they did get a lot of dust in behind them and required daily cleaning to get the best performance out of the lights. This problem isn't limited to the Bushranger covers, but all covers on lights. That said, replacing a cracked plastic cover is a lot cheaper than replacing an expensive LED light should it get struck by a stone.

With their solid construction, excellent performance, innovative adjustable output and the simple plug-and-play VLI wiring system, we reckon the Bushranger Night Hawks were worthy winners of our comparison and certainly among the best LED lights available for your fourby. **4x4**



RATED

AVAILABLE FROM:

bushranger.com.au &
ARB stores

RRP: Lights \$447.50 each;
VLI harness \$89

WE SAY: Powerful light
with an innovative and
simple system.



**RATED**

AVAILABLE FROM:

3dmats.com.au

RRP: \$279 + shipping (PXII Ford Ranger double cab)

WE SAY: Fit-and-forget protection for vehicle carpet.

UNDER COVER

SET-AND-FORGET CARPET PROTECTION, WITH A SET OF TRUFIT 3D MATS.

OF THE 15,000km we've covered in our Ford Ranger in the first six months we had it, a large percentage of it was off-road. Trips to the Red Centre, Simpson Desert, Flinders Ranges and the Vic High Country saw us in dust, sand, rocks and mud, so keeping all that dirt out of the floor carpets was a good idea.

I've used plenty of different protective floor mats over the years, from heavy rubber ones to carpet and plastic ones, but they all have their pros and cons. One of the biggest cons is ill-fitting mats that slip and move around in the footwell until you end up chucking them out.

For the Ranger, we tried out the 3D Maxtrac moulded mats from TruFit. TruFit has been making moulded replacement carpets for cars for decades, so it knows the importance of a product that fits the contours of the vehicle's floor, and they've applied this knowledge and experience to the 3D mats.

The first thing you notice about the mats when you fit them is that they are a perfect fit for the footwell. We've fitted them in both the front and back of the Ranger and they fit like a glove.

And once they're in, the mats don't move around at all thanks to the patented 'Maxpider' backing that grips into the carpet, kind of like Velcro.

The mats are a three-layer construction: the Maxpider backing; an inner layer that is waterproof, shockproof and offers some sound insulation; and the top layer which can be either a rubber compound or polyester carpet. We've gone with the rubber 3D mats to make them easy to keep clean. Simply remove them from the car and shake them off – brush them if required, or hose them off if they're muddy. Simple and effective protection for carpet and easy to keep clean ... what more could you ask for?

The best part about the 3D mats is that you don't even know they're there. They don't move underfoot, so they never gather or get stuck beneath your boots – they are very much fit and forget. Just pull them out and clean them when needed.

The 3D mats are vehicle specific as they are moulded to each model, and TruFit has a huge range that covers all the popular 4x4 models. **4x4**



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*Google Analytics September 2019

READERS' RIGS

PRADO GXL WITH THE LOT GETS THE NOD AS THIS MONTH'S BEST 4X4.



4X4 ACCESSORIES

WEB: WHICHCAR.COM.AU/READERRIGS

FACEBOOK: @4X4AUS

**READERS' RIG
WINNER**
4X4
AUSTRALIA
OF THE MONTH



STEVEN FOOT

2017 PRADO GXL

Kit added includes an Opposite Lock triple-loop bar; side rails and steps for protection; Safari snorkel; diesel pre-filter and catch can; two-inch Outback Armour lift with Goodyear Wrangler Duratracs in 265/70R17; Hard Korr 22-inch light bar; GME XRS UHF paired to an RFI antenna, and Cel-Fi Go to an RFI 4G antenna; Roadsaf recovery points up front; and a Domin8r X Winch. Inside, I've added Drifta custom drawers and a 40L Evakool drawer fridge run by a 105amp/h Century battery and Intervolt DCC pro. She has taken us to plenty of great places and many more to come hopefully. Favourite trip so far is to Uluru and the West MacDonnell Ranges.

TONY CASTELLANO

1989 JEEP GRAND WAGONEER

This is one of the original 26 imported and converted back in 1989. Patiently restored by dad and me. Horrible fuel consumption, a little unreliable and has the turning circle of cruise ship, but I wouldn't have it any other way.



CRAIG MCCARDLE

2018 MQ TRITON

Blackline model with Stedi Type-X Pro driving lights and a 40-inch ST2K light bar; Ironman bullbar; Terrain Tamer Heavy Duty Suspension kit; two-inch suspension lift; dual-battery system with Redarc Isolator; Windbooster S3 Throttle Controller; Stedi fog lights with DRLs; GME XRS Connect; 370c UHF; Clarion subwoofer; rear-mounted 40-inch light bar with two LED work lights; and a 12,000lb winch.

WIN THIS!



4X4 ACCESSORIES



GET SNAPPIN'

SEND IN your pics and you could win an ARB High Output Air Compressor valued at \$335. Constructed entirely of lightweight, high-grade materials, the ARB High Output Air Compressor has a class-leading flow rate. Designed for Air Locker activation, fast tyre inflation and a range of other functions.



GREG NOBLE

2019 Y62 PATROL TI

A two-inch lift; Safiery lithium battery; 1200W inverter; Stedi lights throughout; a myCOOLMAN 69-litre fridge/freezer; Darche 180 awning; Runva 11,000lb winch; Dash Predator front bar; Kaymar rear bar; RV aluminium drawer system; XForce exhaust; Apple CarPlay; Maxxis 35-inch MTs; and Method Racing wheels.

SCOTT WILLIAMSON

2016 FORD EVEREST

It has a Dobinson two-inch lift; Toyo RT 285/70R17s; ROH Beadlocks; Ironman bar and winch; ARB UVP and recovery point; SCF sliders (not in this pic); TJM snorkel; Yakima LockNLoad platform; Rhino awning; GME UHF; dual-battery system; CFF45 on custom slide; Kings spotties; and more.



BRYCE PURDEN

TOYOTA 200 SERIES GXL SUPER TOURER

It's wrapped in matte orange and has two boxes on the back. It also has a Redarc Manager30; ARB Air Lockers; Switch-Pros switch module; Mickey Thompson ATZs; ICOM HF radio; GME UHF; MSA 4x4 seat covers; 40-litre Engel; and an HX-1 GPS.





REAR RENEWED

THE RANGER GETS NEW LEAF SPRINGS AND SHOCKS FOR THE BACK END.

NO ACTION for our Ranger over the New Year period as it was parked up for the holidays, but no sooner than we were back in town and it was in the shop getting new parts fitted.

First stop was back to Ironman 4x4 HQ in Dandenong to get the rear leaf springs replaced. When we first had the Ironman suspension fitted it was set up with the standard tub on the back, not the AMVE aluminium canopy. With the canopy on and loaded the medium rate (200kg to 400kg) leafs were at their limit so they've been replaced with Ironman's Constant Load springs rated to 400kg+.

The team at Ironman 4x4 also upgraded the rear shocks to match the higher-rated springs, again using the company's Foam Cell Pro shocks, but


with the new Professional Valving which offers improved performance under heavier loads. Released late in 2019, the Professional Valving shocks are designed for those who use their vehicle as a fully loaded workshop on wheels or regular tourers who load up for extended off-road adventures. The Professional Valving Series dampers are available across Ironman's Nitro Gas, Foam Cell and Foam Cell Pro ranges.

Our tenure with the Maxxis RAZR muddies is up and after a little more than 15,000km on them I've got to say we have been very impressed. They're relatively quiet on road, never struggled off road, and suffered no punctures or signs of damage after some torturous rocky tracks in the Flinders; they're right up there

with my favourite mud-terrain tyres, and at a price that comes in a fair bit cheaper than the competition.

We have replaced the RAZRs with Goodyear's MT/Rs, again in the 285/70R17 size. I've had great service out of the old-style MT/Rs going back a few years so I'll be keen to see how these newer ones perform on and off the road.

Initial impressions of the new rear suspension and Goodyear tyres has only been from ferrying it around town, but so far so good. We'll have to wait until we load it up for a few more off-road kays before we can give a full report.

Before we head off again we'll fit a set of MSA 4x4 adjustable towing mirrors and we'll swap out the driving lights with a new setup. 

WORDS MATT RAUDONIKIS

THANKS TO

www.club4x4.com.au
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www.mycoolman.com.au



The Ranger now wears new 400kg+ constant-load leaf springs.



Ironman Foam Cell Pro shocks now feature Professional Valving.



We've fitted a set of Goodyear Wrangler MT/Rs on the Ranger.



WHEN WE FIRST HAD THE IRONMAN SUSPENSION FITTED IT WAS SET UP WITH THE STANDARD TUB ON THE BACK, NOT THE AMVE ALUMINIUM CANOPY





4X4 SHED

2019 MITSUBISHI
TRITON GLX+006775⁹ KMDATE ACQUIRED: JAN 2020
PRICE: \$50,403 (AS TESTED)
KM SINCE LAST UPDATE: N/A
AV FUEL: N/A

TRITON ON DUTY

WE WELCOME A MITSUBISHI TRITON GLX+ TO THE 4X4 AUSTRALIA SHED.

A NEW YEAR and a new long-term test truck for the magazine, as we welcome this Triton GLX+ to the shed. The Triton finished 2019 as the third best-selling 4x4 in Australia, launching with a full reskin early in the year and receiving an up-spec towards the end of the year.

The new look came with a heavy load of standard safety equipment to give the Triton more safety kit than any other 4x4 ute on the market, including those that cost almost twice as much. The standard inclusion of rear cross-traffic alert puts it ahead of European rivals such as the Mercedes-Benz X-Class and VW Amarok, in terms of standard safety equipment.

Our demo model comes with more than

6000km on the clock and a few factory extras including the steel front bar, LED light bar, a tow bar, floor mats and a tonneau cover. These add around \$7K to the drive-away price, but on current pricing you could drive out in a GLX+ with all this kit for \$47,668. That's a lot of truck for less than \$50K. The Triton owes its sales success to sharp pricing and value for money.

There was good news for off-roaders with the 2020 updates, with the rear diff lock dipping further down in the range so that this GLX+ specification now has it as standard; it was previously only offered in the top-of-the-range model. Also new was the inclusion of 245/70R16 Bridgestone Dueler all-terrains to the GLX and GLX+.

These worthy additions add to a long line of standard features including the Super Select 4x4 system that gives the user the option of full-time AWD, as well as the usual RWD and locked 4x4 settings. There's a comprehensive A/V system with Apple Carplay/Android Auto, and all the bits and bobs you expect in a mid-range pick-up.

We look forward to putting the Triton through its paces over the next six months. It's always been an honest toiler that gets on with the job without any pretence; it's not everyone's bunch of grapes, but when you consider the safety package and drive-away pricing, it bears further investigation beyond the flash and glamour of some of the more popular 4x4 utes.



Frontal bar, embedded with fog lamps, is a factory option.



Bridgestone Duelers now standard with the GLX and GLX+.



OPTIONS

\$43,490: Vehicle, includes red paint.

\$1170: Tow bar kit.

\$4193: Black frontal protection bar with fog lamps.

\$107: Rubber mat set (front and rear).

\$708: LED light bar.

\$735: Soft tonneau cover.

THE SCORE

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THE ESSENTIAL NUMBERS AND PRICES OF EVERY 4X4 ON SALE IN AUSTRALIA



FORD

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RANGER

Australian-designed, Thai-built Ranger has quickly earned big off-road cred. Raptor's 2.0L bi-turbo diesel is now optional on Wildtrak and XLT (the big seller for recreational off-landers).

	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL	LAST TESTED
Single XL c/c	42,490	L5TD/3.2	M6	470	147	1869	1331	3500	80	
Single XL c/c	44,090	L5TD/3.2	A6	470	147	1887	1313	3500	80	
Super XL c/c	44,990	L5TD/3.2	M6	470	147	1933	1267	3500	80	
Super XL c/c	46,590	L5TD/3.2	A6	470	147	1951	1249	3500	80	
Dual XL c/c	46,690	L4TD/2.2	A6	385	118	1938	1262	3500	80	
Dual XL c/c	46,990	L5TD/3.2	M6	470	147	1995	1205	3500	80	
Dual XL c/c	48,590	L5TD/3.2	A6	470	147	2012	1188	3500	80	
Super XL p/u	48,590	L5TD/3.2	A6	470	147	2085	1115	3500	80	
Dual XL p/u	48,090	L4TD/2.2	A6	385	118	2064	1136	3500	80	
Dual XL p/u	48,390	L5TD/3.2	M6	470	147	2118	1082	3500	80	
Dual XL p/u	50,090	L5TD/3.2	A6	470	147	2135	1065	3500	80	
Dual XLS p/u	49,690	L5TD/3.2	M6	470	147	2191	1009	3500	80	
Dual XLS p/u	51,390	L5TD/3.2	A6	470	147	2209	991	3500	80	
Super XLT p/u	56,840	L5TD/3.2	A6	470	147	2178	1022	3500	80	
Super XLT p/u	58,340	L4TD/2.0	A10	500	157	2146	1054	3500	80	
Dual XLT p/u	56,640	L5TD/3.2	M6	470	147	2212	988	3500	80	
Dual XLT p/u	58,190	L5TD/3.2	A6	470	147	2230	970	3500	80	Jul 18
Dual XLT p/u	60,340	L4TD/2.0	A10	500	157	2197	1003	3500	80	Feb 19
Dual Wildtrak	61,490	L5TD/3.2	M6	470	147	2260	940	3500	80	
Dual Wildtrak	62,790	L5TD/3.2	A6	470	147	2278	922	3500	80	Apr 19
Dual Wildtrak	65,190	L4TD/2.0	A10	500	157	2246	954	3500	80	Apr 19
Sport	52,940	L5TD/3.2	M6	470	147	2191	1009	3500	80	
Sport	55,140	L5TD/3.2	A6	470	147	2209	991	3500	80	
Raptor	76,290	L4TD/2.0	A10	500	157	2332	758	2500	80	Nov 19



EVEREST

Ranger-based seven-seater was our *2015 4X4 of the Year*. Midlife update saw 2.0L bi-turbo added.

	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL	LAST TESTED
Ambiente (5 seat)	54,490	L5TD/3.2	A6	470	143	2370	730	3000	80	
Ambiente (7s)	55,190	L5TD/3.2	A6	470	143	2343	757	3000	80	
Trend (7s)	60,290	L5TD/3.2	A6	470	143	2407	693	3000	80	Aug 17
Trend (7s)	61,790	L4TD/2.0	A10	500	157	2413	687	3100	80	Feb 19
Sport (7s)	62,290	L5TD/3.2	A6	470	143	N/A	N/A	3000	80	
Sport (7s)	63,790	L4TD/2.0	A10	500	157	N/A	N/A	3100	80	
Titanium (7s)	72,590	L4TD/2.0	A10	500	157	2477	623	3100	80	



FOTON

3-year/100,000km www.fotonmotor.com.au



TUNLAND

Foton is a Chinese manufacturer responsible for Tunland Utes; dual-cabs available in no-nonsense specification and powered by a Cummins turbo-diesel.

	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL	LAST TESTED
Standard dual-cab	29,990*	L4TD/2.8	M5	365	130	1951	974	2500	76	
Standard dual-cab	33,990*	L4TD/2.8	A6	365	130	1971	954	2500	76	
Luxury dual-cab	30,990*	L4TD/2.8	M5	365	130	1951	974	2500	76	
Luxury dual-cab	35,490*	L4TD/2.8	A6	365	130	1971	954	2500	76	

*This is a nationwide drive-away price, not a list price, and includes on-roads.



GREAT WALL

5-year/150,000km www.greatwallmotors.com.au



STEED

Great Wall's facelifted version of the the V200/V240 continues the cheap and cheerful theme but gets a new nose, interior and 150mm longer tray.

	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL	LAST TESTED
Single-Cab	19,990*	L4TD/2.0	M6	310	110	1687	1198	1700	70	
Dual-Cab	30,990*	L4TD/2.0	M6	310	110	1900	1020	2000	75	Sum 18

*This is a nationwide drive-away price, not a list price, and includes on-roads.



HAVAL

5-year/100,000km www.haval.com.au



H9

The Chinese-made Haval H9 is a midsize 4x4 from Great Wall's luxury arm. It's a relatively fresh arrival on the Aussie market.

	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL	LAST TESTED
H9 Lux	41,990*	L4/2.0	A8	350	180	2250	645	2500	80	
H9 Ultra	45,990*	L4/2.0	A8	350	180	2250	645	2500	80	Feb 18

*This is a nationwide drive-away price, not a list price, and includes on-roads.



HOLDEN

5-year/unlimited km www.holden.com.au



COLORADO

Holden's Thai-made Colorado has received a fresh face and new driver-assistance technology as part of a mid-cycle upgrade. MY20 update gets the LSX as a full-time variant.

	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL	LAST TESTED
LS Single c/c	37,490	L4TD/2.8	M5	440	147	1962	1138	3500	76	
LS Single c/c	39,990	L4TD/2.8	A6	500	147	1959	1141	3500	76	
LS Space c/c	43,190	L4TD/2.8	A6	500	147	1856	1294	3500	76	
LS Crew c/c	43,490	L4TD/2.8	M6	440	147	1927	1223	3500	76	
LS Crew c/c	45,690	L4TD/2.8	A6	500	147	1920	1230	3500	76	
LS Crew p/u	44,990	L4TD/2.8	M6	440	147	2072	1078	3500	76	
LS Crew p/u	47,190	L4TD/2.8	A6	500	147	2065	1085	3500	76	
LSX Crew p/u	46,990	L4TD/2.8	M6	440	147	2110	1040	3500	76	
LSX Crew p/u	49,190	L4TD/2.8	A6	500	147	2103	1047	3500	76	Dec 19
LTZ Space p/u	51,190	L4TD/2.8	A6	500	147	2077	1073	3500	76	
LTZ Crew p/u	50,490	L4TD/2.8	M6	440	147	2144	1006	3500	76	
LTZ Crew p/u	52,690	L4TD/2.8	A6	500	147	2137	1013	3500	76	
LTZ+ Crew p/u	51,520	L4TD/2.8	M6	440	147	2179	971	3500	76	
LTZ+ Crew p/u	53,720	L4TD/2.8	A6	500	147	2172	978	3500	76	
Z71 Crew p/u	54,990	L4TD/2.8	M6	440	147	2170	980	3500	76	
Z71 Crew p/u	57,190	L4TD/2.8	A6	500	147	2163	987	3500	76	
SportsCat V	62,490	L4TD/2.8	M6	440	147	2257	893	3500	76	
SportsCat V	64,690	L4TD/2.8	A6	500	147	2250	900	3500	76	
SportsCat SV	66,790	L4TD/2.8	M6	440	147	2257	893	3500	76	
SportsCat SV	68,990	L4TD/2.8	A6	500	147	2250	900	3500	76	



TRAILBLAZER

Seven-seat wagon based on Colorado sibling refreshed with a new name, new face and technology. Seven pews may make it a family favourite, but touring use is limited to five.

LT	47,990	L4TD/2.8	A6	500	147	2072	678	3000	76	Jan 17
LTZ	52,490	L4TD/2.8	A6	500	147	2203	617	3000	76	Sum 18
Z71	53,490	L4TD/2.8	A6	500	147	2203	617	3000	76	



INFINITI

4-year/100,000km

www.infiniticars.com.au



QX80

Nissan luxury brand's bold-looking, tech-laden version of the Y62 Patrol. Like Y62, no diesel offered.

	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL	LAST TESTED
QX80	110,900	V8/5.6	A7	560	298	2829	794	3500	100	Sep 18



ISUZU UTE

6-year/150,000km www.isuzuute.com.au



D-MAX

D-Max shares body architecture with Holden Colorado. Powered by Isuzu's respected 3.0-litre TD that has been tweaked for more torque, mated to six-speed manual and auto transmissions.

	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL	LAST TESTED
SX Single c/c	38,200	L4TD/3.0	M6	430	130	1736	1314	3500	76	
SX Single c/c	40,300	L4TD/3.0	A6	430	130	1736	1314	3500	76	
SX Space c/c	41,000	L4TD/3.0	M6	430	130	1826	1224	3500	76	
SX Space c/c	43,100	L4TD/3.0	A6	430	130	1826	1224	3500	76	
LS-U Space p/u	48,700	L4TD/3.0	A6	430	130	1981	1069	3500	76	
SX Crew c/c	43,400	L4TD/3.0	M6	430	130	1886	1164	3500	76	
SX Crew c/c	45,500	L4TD/3.0	A6	430	130	1891	1159	3500	76	

SX Crew p/u	44,600	L4TD/3.0	M6	430	130	2016	1034	3500	76	
SX Crew p/u	46,700	L4TD/3.0	A6	430	130	2016	1034	3500	76	
LS-M Crew p/u	46,900	L4TD/3.0	M6	430	130	2001	1049	3500	76	
LS-M Crew p/u	49,000	L4TD/3.0	A6	430	130	2001	1049	3500	76	
LS-U Crew p/u	48,800	L4TD/3.0	M6	430	130	2021	1029	3500	76	
LS-U Crew p/u	50,900	L4TD/3.0	A6	430	130	2021	1029	3500	76	
LS-T Crew p/u	54,800	L4TD/3.0	A6	430	130	2026	1024	3500	76	Apr 19

**MU-X**

Isuzu's seven-seat wagon based on the D-Max ute underpinnings, but with a smooth-riding coil-spring rear suspension. Uses Isuzu's respected 3.0-litre TD engine.

	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL	LAST TESTED
LS-M	50,200	L4TD/3.0	A6	430	130	2092	658	3000	65	
LS-U	52,600	L4TD/3.0	A6	430	130	2142	608	3000	65	Feb 18
LS-T	56,400	L4TD/3.0	A6	430	130	2157	593	3000	65	Aug 18

**JEEP**5-year/unlimited km www.jeep.com.au**WRANGLER**

JL Wrangler has true off-road credentials, great versatility, a choice of high-tech petrol and diesel engines, and an eight-speed auto. In Rubicon-spec the Wrangler is an absolute off-road weapon.

	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL	LAST TESTED
Sport S (2-door)	48,950	V6/3.6	A8	347	209	1762	551	1497	66	
Sport S (4-door)	53,450	V6/3.6	A8	347	209	1900	560	2495	81	
Overland (2-door)	59,450	V6/3.6	A8	347	209	1762	551	1497	66	Sum 20
Overland (4-door)	63,950	V6/3.6	A8	347	209	1900	560	2495	81	
Rubicon (4-door)	65,450	V6/3.6	A8	347	209	1992	570	2495	81	Dec 19
Rubicon (4-door)	70,950	L4TD/2.2	A8	450	147	2160	470	2495	81	Nov 19



RANGER RULES 2019

THE Ford Ranger has stamped 2019 shut with a comprehensive victory on the 4x4 sales charts. The Blue Oval ute finished off the year with a total of 37,004 (4x4) sales, edging out its long-term nemesis – the Toyota Hilux – by a not insignificant 679 units. The Hilux was the best-selling 4x4 in 2018, but sales dropped in 2019 by 5.8 per cent; reflective of overall market trends.

Interestingly, Ford sold more Ranger 4x4s in 2019 than it did in 2018, bucking a trend in the market which saw a dramatic drop in new vehicle sales. Case in point, 90,244 fewer new vehicles were purchased in 2019 (a year-to-date drop of 7.8 per cent), and 12,337 fewer LCV vehicles were purchased during that same time. Despite the drop-off in sales, the LCV segment experienced annual growth of 0.6 per cent to claim a 21.2 per cent share of the overall new-vehicle market.

It was business as usual on the monthly 4x4 charts, with the Hilux, Ranger and Triton once again occupying the podium. Isuzu's D-Max also ended the decade with a flourish, shifting 1394 units in December and climbing to fourth spot on the charts.

The Toyota Hilux (4x2/4x4) was once again the best-selling vehicle on the annual charts, registering 47,649 sales in 2019. The Ford Ranger (4x2/4x4) closed out the year in second spot with 40,960 sales, while the Corolla trailed in with a total of 30,468 sales.

If the rumours of Ford adding V8 power to its local Ranger Raptor come true, buyers may chose to pocket their hard-earned in anticipation. It'll be interesting to see how sales pan out in the immediate future ... keep your eyes peeled!



BY THE NUMBERS

Top-selling 4x4s in December 2019


Source: VFACTS


	VEHICLE	UNITS
1	Toyota Hilux	3264
2	Ford Ranger	3099
3	Mitsubishi Triton	2146
4	Isuzu D-Max	1394
5	Toyota Prado	1390
6	Holden Colorado	1252
7	Toyota LandCruiser wagon	980
8	Nissan Navara	858
9	Isuzu MU-X	802
10	Volkswagen Amarok	706
11	Toyota LandCruiser PU/CC	638
12	Ford Everest	441
13	Mazda BT-50	438
14	Mitsubishi Pajero Sport	404
15	Mitsubishi Pajero	306
16	RAM 1500	270
17	LDV T60	267
18	Mercedes-Benz X-Class	226
19	Toyota Fortuner	225
20	Holden Trailblazer	217


Top-selling 4x4s in 2019


Source: VFACTS


	VEHICLE	UNITS
1	Ford Ranger	37,004
2	Toyota Hilux	36,325
3	Mitsubishi Triton	22,681
4	Toyota Prado	18,335
5	Holden Colorado	15,650
6	Toyota Land Cruiser wagon	13,802
7	Isuzu D-Max	11,776
8	Nissan Navara	10,661
9	Toyota Land Cruiser PU/CC	9222
10	Isuzu MU-X	8419


	CHEROKEE									
	The MY19 update for the KL Cherokee – the fourth generation of the series – included a design facelift, modern in-vehicle tech and autonomous emergency braking across the range.									
	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL	LAST TESTED
Longitude	41,950	V6/3.2	A9	315	200	1780	678	2200	60	
Limited	46,950	V6/3.2	A9	315	200	1806	652	2200	60	
Trailhawk	48,450	V6/3.2	A9	315	200	1889	605	2200	60	

	GRAND CHEROKEE									
	Jeep's Grand Cherokee runs a grunty Pentastar V6, efficient 3.0TD V6, or the Hemi V8. Quadra-lift air suspension for Limited and Overland, rather than coils. Five seats and tight luggage area.									
	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL	LAST TESTED
Laredo	52,950	V6/3.6	A8	347	213	2084	865	2812	93	
Laredo TDV6	57,950	V6/3.0TD	A8	570	184	2267	682	3500	93	
Limited	63,950	V6/3.6	A8	347	213	2169	780	2812	93	
Limited TDV6	69,950	V6/3.0TD	A8	570	184	2281	688	3500	93	
Trailhawk	75,950	V6/3.0TD	A8	570	184	2300	650	3500	93	Feb 18
Overland TDV6	79,450	V6/3.0TD	A8	570	184	2415	534	3500	93	
Summit	85,950	V6/3.0TD	A8	570	184	2327	622	3500	93	
SRT	92,450	V8/6.4	A8	624	344	2289	612	2949	93	
Trackhawk	134,950	V8/6.2	A8	868	522	2399	535	2949	93	


	JMC 3-year/100,000km www.jmcmotor.com.au									
	VIGUS									
	A low-priced Chinese ute imported and distributed by the local arm of JMC and using proprietary powertrain components from the likes of Mitsubishi and Getrag.									
	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL	LAST TESTED
Vigus LX	24,990	L4/2.4	M5	201	95	1880	815	2000	74	
Vigus LX	27,990	L4TD/2.4	M5	290	88	1947	823	2000	68	
Vigus SLX	30,990	L4TD/2.4	M5	290	88	1947	823	2000	68	


	LAND ROVER 3-year/100,000km www.landrover.com.au									
	DISCOVERY									
	Land Rover Discovery combines excellent on-road dynamics with impressive off-road capability. Strong performance comes courtesy of state-of-the-art four-cylinder and V6 turbo-diesel engines.									
	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL	LAST TESTED
SD4 S	73,221	L4TD/2.0	A8	430	177	2109	831	3500	77	
SD4 SE	88,421	L4TD/2.0	A8	430	177	2109	831	3500	77	Jul 19
SD4 HSE	100,721	L4TD/2.0	A8	430	177	2109	831	3500	77	
SD4 HSE Luxury	115,021	L4TD/2.0	A8	430	177	2109	831	3500	77	
SDV6 S	85,499	V6TD/3.0	A8	700	225	2236	814	3500	85	
SDV6 SE	99,749	V6TD/3.0	A8	700	225	2236	814	3500	85	
SDV6 Landmark	108,169	V6TD/3.0	A8	700	225	2236	814	3500	85	
SDV6 HSE	112,049	V6TD/3.0	A8	700	225	2236	814	3500	85	Nov 19
SDV6 HSE Luxury	126,399	V6TD/3.0	A8	700	225	2236	814	3500	85	


	RANGE ROVER SPORT									
	Rangie Sport is available with four-, six- and eight-cylinder diesel engines, a PHEV or a stonking super-charged petrol V8. It delivers performance luxury and genuine off-road capability.									
	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL	LAST TESTED
Si4 S	97,729	L4TP/2.0	A8	400	221	2027	873	3000	104	Mar 19
Si4 SE	101,029	L4TP/2.0	A8	400	221	2027	873	3000	104	
Si4 PHEV SE	129,559	L4TP/2.0	A8	400	221	2415	785	2500	91	
Si4 PHEV HSE	147,959	L4TP/2.0	A8	400	221	2415	785	2500	91	
V8 HSE Dynamic	173,629	V8SP/5.0	A8	625	386	2252	848	3500	104	
V8 Autobiography	204,929	V8SP/5.0	A8	625	386	2252	848	3500	104	
V8 SVR	238,829	V8SP/5.0	A8	700	423	2239	761	3000	104	
SDV6 SE (183)	108,401	V6TD/3.0	A8	600	183	2159	891	3500	86	
SDV6 SE (225)	117,901	V6TD/3.0	A8	700	225	2159	891	3500	86	
SDV6 HSE	137,701	V6TD/3.0	A8	700	225	2159	891	3500	86	
SDV6 HSE Dyn	144,601	V6TD/3.0	A8	700	225	2159	891	3500	86	
SDV6 Autobio	179,401	V6TD/3.0	A8	700	225	2159	891	3500	86	
SDV8 HSE	150,829	V8TD/4.4	A8	740	250	2344	856	3500	86	
SDV8 HSE Dyn	158,129	V8TD/4.4	A8	740	250	2344	856	3500	86	

	RANGE ROVER									
	Land Rover combines supreme luxury and off-road capability in the Rangie. More power, less weight and better economy are just some of the improvements to the über-roader.									
	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL	LAST TESTED
SDV6 Vogue	196,102	V6TD/3.0	A8	625	202	2328	802	3500	86	
SDV8 Vogue	212,195	V8TD/4.4	A8	740	250	2570	720	3500	86	
SDV8 Vogue SE	230,795	V8TD/4.4	A8	740	250	2570	720	3500	86	
SDV8 Auto SWB	261,310	V8TD/4.4	A8	740	250	2570	720	3500	86	Nov 18
I6 Vogue	201,395	I6TP/3.0	A8	550	294	2342	798	3500	104	
Si4 PHEV	211,925	I4TP/2.0	A8	400	221	2577	633	2500	90	Jul 19
V8 Auto SWB	274,210	V8SP/5.0	A8	625	386	2450	710	3500	104	
V8 SVAuto Dyn SWB	346,170	V8SP/5.0	A8	700	416	2591	569	3500	104	

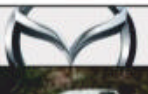
SDV8 Auto LWB	271,310	V8TD/4.4	A8	740	250	2658	682	3500	86	
SDV8 SVAuto LWB	377,170	V8TD/4.4	A8	740	250	2658	682	3500	86	
V8 Auto LWB	284,410	V8SP/5.0	A8	625	386	2518	682	3500	104	
V8 SVAuto LWB	403,670	V8SP/5.0	A8	700	416	2673	527	3500	104	


	LDV 5-year/130,000km www.ldvautomotive.com.au									
	T60									
	Chinese ute brings five-star safety to the budget-priced dual-cab segment.									
	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL	LAST TESTED
Pro cab-chassis	28,411	L4TD/2.8	M6	360	110	1720	1255	3000	75	
Pro dual-cab	30,516	L4TD/2.8	M6	360	110	1950	1025	3000	75	
Pro dual-cab	32,621	L4TD/2.8	A6	360	110	1980	995	3000	75	
Luxe dual-cab	34,726	L4TD/2.8	M6	360	110	1995	875	3000	75	
Luxe dual-cab	36,831	L4TD/2.8	A6	360	110	2060	815	3000	75	Sum 17
Trailrider d-c	38,937	L4TD/2.8	M6	360	110	2100	850	3000	75	Aug 19
Trailrider d-c	41,042	L4TD/2.8	A6	360	110	2110	765	3000	75	Oct 19

	LEXUS 4-year/100,000km www.lexus.com.au									
	LX									
	Take one Land Cruiser 200, give it a nose job, a whopping 5.7-litre petrol V8 and bunch of extra tech gizmos and voila, you have the Lexus LX570.									
	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL	LAST TESTED
LX570	142,431	V8/5.7	A8	530	270	2740	705	3500	138	Sep 18
LX570 S	167,731	V8/5.7	A8	530	270	2740	TBC	3500	138	
LX450 D	135,171	V8/4.5	A6	650	200	2660	TBC	3500	93	Sep 18

	MAHINDRA 5-year/unlimited www.mahindra.com.au									
	PIK-UP									
	Now has standard airbags and ABS, and recently received a new, more powerful engine. Available in single- and dual-cab configuration with or without a tub. Easy!									
	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL	LAST TESTED
Single c/c	26,990*	L4TD/2.2	M6	330	103	1780	1370	2500	80	April 18
Dual c/c	29,490*	L4TD/2.2	M6	330	103	1940	1210	2500	80	
Dual p/u	29,990*	L4TD/2.2	M6	330	103	2080	1070	2500	80	
Dual p/u S10	31,990*	L4TD/2.2	M6	330	103	2080	1070	2500	80	Feb 19

*This is a nationwide drive-away price, not a list price, and includes on-roads.

	MAZDA 5-year/unlimited km www.mazda.com.au									
	BT-50									
	Developed in Australia in tandem with Ford Ranger. Its big attraction is its sharp pricing. Diff lock and low-range TC work great. 3.2-litre only.									
	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL	LAST TESTED
Single Cab XT c/c	39,980	L5TD/3.2	M6	470	147	1789	1411	3500	80	
Freestyle XT c/c	44,170	L5TD/3.2	M6	470	147	1857	1343	3500	80	
Freestyle XTR c/c	51,110	L5TD/3.2	M6	470	147	2037	1163	3500	80	
Dual XT c/c	46,010	L5TD/3.2	M6	470	147	1929	1271	3500	80	
Dual XT p/u	45,840	L5TD/3.2	M6	470	147	2044	1156	3500	80	
Dual XT p/u	47,840	L5TD/3.2	A6	470	147	2061	1139	3500	80	
Dual XTR p/u	50,950	L5TD/3.2	M6	470	147	2086	1114	3500	80	
Dual XTR p/u	52,950	L5TD/3.2	A6	470	147	2103	1097	3500	80	
Dual GT p/u	56,830	L5TD/3.2	M6	470	147	2095	1105	3500	80	
Dual GT p/u	58,830	L5TD/3.2	A6	470	147	2112	1088	3500	80	Jul 18
Boss p/u	63,250	L5TD/3.2	A6	470	147	2174	1026	3500	80	



MERCEDES

3-year/200,000km www.mercedes-benz.com.au

GLE-CLASS

The GLE-Class has arrived to take over from the M-Class. Like the M-Class, you need to select the Off-Road Engineering Package to get a dual-range transmission. This is not available on the GLE 63 AMG.

	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL	LAST TESTED
GLE250d	93,900	L4TD/2.1	A9	500	150	2150	800	3265	93	
GLE350d	110,300	V6TD/3.0	A9	620	190	2175	775	3265	93	
GLE500e	131,000	V6/3.0	A9	480	245	2130	770	2000	70	

	X-CLASS									
	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL	LAST TESTED
X220d Pure p/u	50,400	I4TD/2.3	M6	403	120	2126	1056	3200	80	
X250d Pure c/c	51,450	I4TD/2.3	M6	450	140	2010	1172	3500	80	
X250d Pure p/u	52,400	I4TD/2.3	M6	450	140	2140	1042	3500	80	
X250d Prog c/c	53,950	I4TD/2.3	M6	450	140	1994	1188	3500	80	
X250d Prog p/u	54,900	I4TD/2.3	M6	450	140	2130	1052	3500	80	Feb 19
X250d Power p/u	61,600	I4TD/2.3	M6	450	140	2155	1027	3500	80	Aug 18
X350d Prog d/c	73,270	V6TD/3.0	A7	550	190	2166	1034	3500	80	
X350d Power d/c	79,415	V6TD/3.0	A7	550	190	2190	1010	3500	80	Apr 19

MITSUBISHI 7-year/150,000km www.mitsubishi-motors.com.au										
PAJERO										
With all-independent suspension, Pajero has class-leading on-road handling. Effective traction control and rear diff lock make it very handy off-road, too. Sharp base price makes it a great all-rounder.										
	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL	LAST TESTED
GLX	53,990	L4TD/3.2	A5	441	141	2302	728	3000	88	
GLS	59,490	L4TD/3.2	A5	441	141	2319	711	3000	88	

PAJERO SPORT										
Pajero Sport replaces Challenger in Mitsubishi's 4x4 range. It's still on a Triton ute chassis but with rear coils under the back and bespoke bodywork. 2020 refresh added the Dynamic Shield front-end.										
	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL	LAST TESTED
GLX (5-seat)	46,990	L4TD/2.4	A8	430	133	N/A	N/A	3100	68	
GLS (5s)	51,490	L4TD/2.4	A8	430	133	N/A	N/A	3100	68	
GLS (7s)	52,490	L4TD/2.4	A8	430	133	N/A	N/A	3100	68	
Exceed (7s)	57,190	L4TD/2.4	A8	430	133	N/A	N/A	3100	68	



NEW LOOK FOR 2020 PAJ SPORT

MITSUBISHI has given its Pajero Sport a midlife update, with the 2020 model bolstered by a new-look front-end, a power tailgate and a new digital instrument display. The front-end has been given the same treatment the Triton ute scored during its midlife refresh in 2019, with Mitsubishi's 'Dynamic Shield' design concept giving the Sport more chrome and a wider, bolder visual punch. However, the changes – albeit minor – do run deeper than a facelift.

An eight-inch colour LCD instrument panel is available on Exceed models, while Apple CarPlay/Android Auto can now be accessed via the smartphone-link display audio (SDA) system. A remote control app has also been developed, which allows the user to control aspects of the vehicle (again, Exceed only) remotely, including the all-new power tailgate. The tailgate can also be operated hands-free thanks to a kick-motion sensor positioned beneath the rear bar.

All else remains the same, with the 133kW/430Nm 2.4-litre MIVEC turbo-diesel engine and eight-speed automatic transmission staying put. The Super Select 4WD-II drivetrain also carries over and continues to offer four drive modes: 2H, 4H, 4HLc and 4LLc. Introduced with the MY19 update, the 4WD models retain the Off-Road Mode Selector that offers the choice of Gravel, Mud/Snow, Sand and Rock modes.

Independent front suspension with double wishbones and a live-axle three-link rear setup have also been retained. New safety kit for 2020 includes Lane Change Assist (LCA) and Rear Cross Traffic Alert (RCTA).

TRITON										
MQ Triton is an evolution rather than a revolution, but has a more torquey and refined engine, better low range and vastly improved fit-and-finish over the superseded MN series.										
	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL	LAST TESTED
GLX Single c/c	32,990	L4TD/2.4	M6	430	133	1660	1235	3000	75	
GLX Single c/c	34,590	L4TD/2.4	A6	430	133	1665	1235	3000	75	
GLX Club c/c	35,490	L4TD/2.4	M6	430	133	1765	1135	3000	75	
GLX Club c/c	38,790	L4TD/2.4	A6	430	133	1765	1135	3000	75	
GLX+ Club c/c	41,490	L4TD/2.4	A6	430	133	1890	1010	3000	75	
GLX Dual c/c	36,240	L4TD/2.4	M6	430	133	1795	1105	3100	75	
GLX ADAS Dual c/c	39,540	L4TD/2.4	A6	430	133	1795	1105	3100	75	
GLX Dual p/u	37,490	L4TD/2.4	M6	430	133	1920	980	3100	75	
GLX Dual p/u	39,990	L4TD/2.4	A6	430	133	1920	980	3100	75	
GLX ADAS Dual p/u	38,290	L4TD/2.4	M6	430	133	1951	949	3100	75	
GLX ADAS Dual p/u	40,790	L4TD/2.4	A6	430	133	1956	944	3100	75	
GLX+ Dual p/u	40,990	L4TD/2.4	M6	430	133	1915	985	3100	75	
GLX+ Dual p/u	43,490	L4TD/2.4	A6	430	133	1915	985	3100	75	Dec 19
GLS Dual p/u	45,140	L4TD/2.4	M6	430	133	1935	965	3100	75	
GLS Dual p/u	46,990	L4TD/2.4	A6	430	133	1935	965	3100	75	
Premium Dual Cab	52,490	L4TD/2.4	A6	430	133	2042	848	3100	75	May 19

NISSAN 5-year/unlimited km www.nissan.com.au										
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PATROL Y62										
In a segment that drinks diesel, top-spec Patrol is available in V8-petrol guise only. Fully independent suspension is backed by electronic traction aids. Updated model launched late in 2019.										
	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL	LAST TESTED
Ti	75,990	V8/5.6	A7	560	298	2812	688	3500	140	Jan 20
Ti-L	91,990	V8/5.6	A7	560	298	2708	746	3500	140	

NAVARA D23										
The D23 Series 2 arrived with a much-needed improvement to the coil-spring rear suspension. Range-topping N-TREK arrived mid-2019 and brought with it a host of black accessories.										
Single DX c/c	32,650	L4TD/2.3	M6	403	120	1614	1296	3500	80	
Single RX c/c	33,700	L4TD/2.3	M6	403	120	1626	1284	3500	80	
Single RX c/c	36,200	L4TD/2.3	A7	450	140	1632	1278	3500	80	
King RX c/c	36,200	L4TD/2.3	M6	403	120	1727	1183	3500	80	
King RX p/u	38,000	L4TD/2.3	M6	403	120	1863	1047	3500	80	
King ST p/u	45,100	L4TD/2.3	M6	450	140	1908	1002	3500	80	
King ST p/u	47,600	L4TD/2.3	A7	450	140	1911	999	3500	80	
King ST-X p/u	51,250	L4TD/2.3	M6	450	140	1941	969	3500	80	
King ST-X p/u	53,750	L4TD/2.3	A7	450	140	1944	966	3500	80	
Dual RX c/c	39,250	L4TD/2.3	M6	403	120	1759	1147	3500	80	
Dual RX c/c	41,750	L4TD/2.3	A7	450	140	1780	1130	3500	80	Sum 20
Dual RX p/u	43,850	L4TD/2.3	A7	450	140	1823	1087	3500	80	
Dual SL p/u	45,050	L4TD/2.3	M6	403	120	1923	987	3500	80	
Dual SL p/u	47,550	L4TD/2.3	A7	450	140	1928	982	3500	80	
Dual ST p/u	47,900	L4TD/2.3	M6	450	140	1862	1048	3500	80	
Dual ST p/u	50,400	L4TD/2.3	A7	450	140	1865	1045	3500	80	
Dual ST-X p/u	53,250	L4TD/2.3	M6	450	140	1917	993	3500	80	
Dual ST-X p/u	55,750	L4TD/2.3	A7	450	140	1921	989	3500	80	Jul 18
N-TREK	56,450	L4TD/2.3	M6	450	140	1987	923	3500	80	
N-TREK	58,950	L4TD/2.3	A7	450	140	1993	917	3500	80	
N-TREK Warrior	62,990	L4TD/2.3	M6	450	140	2180	730	3500	80	Jan 20
N-TREK Warrior	65,490	L4TD/2.3	A7	450	140	2186	724	3500	80	Jan 20

SSANGYONG 7-year/unlimited km www.ssangyong.com.au										
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MUSSO										
Thrifty South Korean dual-cab has been reborn with more subdued styling and an unbeatable warranty. XLV variant adds segment-topping tray length to the line-up's killer pricing.										
	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL	LAST TESTED
EX	\$30,490	L4TD/2.2	M6	420	133	2177	703	3500	75	
EX	\$32,490	L4TD/2.2	A6	420	133	2192	688	3500	75	
ELX	\$35,990	L4TD/2.2	A6	420	133	2192	688	3500	75	Jan 19
Ultimate	\$39,990	L4TD/2.2	A6	420	133	2192	688	3500	75	
ELX XLV	\$33,990	L4TD/2.2	M6	420	133	2160	1025	3500	75	Jul 19
ELX XLV	\$35,990	L4TD/2.2	A6	420	133	2170	1025	3500	75	Jul 19
Ultimate XLV	\$39,990	L4TD/2.2	A6	420	133	2170	880	3500	75	
Ultimate+ XLV	\$43,990	L4TD/2.2	A6	420	133	2170	880	3500	75	Jul 19

YOUR 4x4's INTERIOR IS NO PLACE FOR DUST OR DIRTY AIR.

A K&N® Cabin Air Filter can make sure of it, helping trap the dust, pollutants and allergens you don't want to breathe. And it's washable and reusable, so after a day following in the dust cloud of other 4x4's, you can easily wash and refresh.



	REXTON									
	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL	LAST TESTED
ELX	46,990	L4TD/2.2	A7	420	133	2233	727	3500	70	Feb 19
Ultimate	52,990*	L4TD/2.2	A7	420	133	2233	727	3500	70	

SUZUKI 3-year/100,000km www.suzuki.com.au										
	JIMNY									
	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL	LAST TESTED
3-door Hardtop	23,990*	L4/1.5	M5	130	75	1095	340	1300	40	Sum 20
3-door Hardtop	25,990*	L4/1.5	A4	130	75	1110	325	1300	40	May 19

*This is a nationwide drive-away price, not a list price, and includes on-roads.

	GRAND VITARA									
	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING*	FUEL	LAST TESTED
Navigator	25,990	L4/2.4	M5	225	122	1489	426	1600	55	
Navigator	27,990	L4/2.4	A4	225	122	1504	537	1600	55	
Sport	30,990	L4/2.4	M5	225	122	1605	465	1850	66	
Sport	32,990	L4/2.4	A4	225	122	1620	480	1700	66	

TATA 4-year/100,000km www.tatamotors.com.au										
	XENON									
	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL	LAST TESTED
Dual-cab p/u	29,990*	L4TD/2.2	A5	320	110	2000	1050	2500	70	

*This is a nationwide drive-away price, not a list price, and includes on-roads.

TOYOTA 5-year/unlimited km www.toyota.com.au										
	PRADO									
	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL	LAST TESTED
GX	54,090	L4TD/2.8	M6	420	130	2150	835	2500	150	
GX	56,490	L4TD/2.8	A6	450	130	2150	835	3000	150	
GXL	60,690	L4TD/2.8	M6	420	130	2205	785	2500	150	Dec 17
GXL	62,990	L4TD/2.8	A6	450	130	2325	665	3000	150	Nov 18
VX	73,990	L4TD/2.8	A6	450	130	2435	555	3000	150	
Kakadu	84,590	L4TD/2.8	A6	450	130	2435	555	3000	150	Jun 17

FORTUNER										
	Toyota's Hilux-based seven-seat wagon competes with Ford Everest, Mitsubishi Pajero Sport, Isuzu MU-X and Holden Trailblazer.									
	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL	LAST TESTED
GX	45,965	L4TD/2.8	A6	450	130	2110	640	2800	80	
GXL	50,790	L4TD/2.8	A6	450	130	2110	640	2800	80	Nov 18
Crusade	58,290	L4TD/2.8	A6	450	130	2110	640	2800	80	Jun 17

LAND CRUISER 200 SERIES										
	With two beaut V8s – petrol and twin-turbo-diesel – the 200 Series Land Cruiser offers loads of performance. Big fuel capacity, big space and big ability make one of the best tourers ever.									
	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL	LAST TESTED
GX TDV8	80,190	V8TD/4.5	A6	650	195	2640	710	3500	138	Jan 12
GXL V8	84,122	V8/4.6	A6	439	228	2555	745	3500	138	
GXL TDV8	91,890	V8TD/4.5	A6	650	195	2630	670	3500	138	Dec 17
VX V8	94,532	V8/4.6	A6	439	228	2610	690	3500	138	
VX TDV8	102,590	V8TD/4.5	A6	650	195	2675	625	3500	138	
Sahara V8	114,872	V8/4.6	A6	439	228	2665	635	3500	138	Sept 14
Sahara TDV8	123,590	V8TD/4.5	A6	650	195	2720	580	3500	138	

LAND CRUISER 70										
	The 70 Series Cruiser's torquey TDV8 makes it a load-hauler extraordinaire. Available as long-wheel-base Troopie or five-door, mid-wheelbase wagon.									
	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL	LAST TESTED
TroopCarrier WM	68,990	V8TD/4.5	M5	430	151	2320	980	3500	180	
TroopCarrier GXL	72,190	V8TD/4.5	M5	430	151	2335	965	3500	180	Jun 17
Wagon Workmate	64,990	V8TD/4.5	M5	430	151	2220	780	3500	90	
Wagon GXL	69,090	V8TD/4.5	M5	430	151	2190	810	3500	90	Feb 08

LAND CRUISER 70 CAB-CHASSIS										
	With its TDV8 powerplant, the Land Cruiser ute is better than ever. Optional Toyota diff locks make it super-capable off-road.									
	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL	LAST TESTED
Workmate c/c	65,240	V8TD/4.5	M5	430	151	2045	1003	3500	180	
GX c/c	67,240	V8TD/4.5	M5	430	151	2010	1013	3500	180	
GXL c/c	69,240	V8TD/4.5	M5	430	151	2020	1023	3500	180	Dec 07

LAND CRUISER 79 DOUBLE CAB										
	Tough-as-nails and with room for five, the LC79 dual-cab has the same V8 manual torque and diff-lock option as other 70s to make for an almost unstoppable off-road workhorse.									
	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL	LAST TESTED
Workmate c/c	67,740	V8TD/4.5	M5	430	151	2205	900	3500	130	
GXL c/c	71,740	V8TD/4.5	M5	430	151	2215	900	3500	130	Mar 17

HILUX										
	The new NG Hilux (built in Thailand) arrived in 2015, with a new 2.8-litre engine, six-speed transmissions and a beefed-up towing capacity.									
	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL	LAST TESTED
W'Mate Single c/c	37,865	L4TD/2.4	M6	400	110	1775	1225	3200	80	
W'Mate Extra c/c	43,465	L4TD/2.4	A6	400	110	1890	1110	3000	80	
W'Mate Dual c/c	45,365	L4TD/2.4	A6	400	110	1915	1085	3000	80	
W'Mate Dual p/u	44,865	L4TD/2.4	M6	400	110	2045	955	3200	80	
W'Mate Dual p/u	46,865	L4TD/2.4	A6	400	110	2045	955	3000	80	
SR Single c/c	40,285	L4TD/2.8	M6	420	130	1795	1205	3500	80	
SR Single c/c	42,285	L4TD/2.8	A6	450	130	1795	1205	3200	80	
SR Extra c/c	43,865	L4TD/2.8	M6	420	130	1890	1110	3500	80	
SR Extra c/c	45,865	L4TD/2.8	A6	450	130	1895	1155	3200	80	
SR Dual c/c	46,015	L4TD/2.8	M6	420	130	1955	1045	3500	80	
SR Dual c/c	48,015	L4TD/2.8	A6	450	130	1955	1045	3200	80	
SR Dual p/u	47,515	L4TD/2.8	M6	420	130	2050	950	3500	80	
SR Dual p/u	49,515	L4TD/2.8	A6	450	130	2045	955	3200	80	
SR5 Extra p/u	55,240	L4TD/2.8	A6	450	130	2045	1005	3200	80	
SR5 Dual p/u	55,240	L4TD/2.8	M6	420	130	2040	960	3500	80	
SR5 Dual p/u	57,240	L4TD/2.8	A6	450	130	2045	955	3200	80	
Rogue Dual p/u	62,490	L4TD/2.8	A6	450	130	2174	826	3200	80	
Rugged Dual p/u	55,865	L4TD/2.8	M6	420	130	2238	762	3500	80	
Rugged Dual p/u	57,865	L4TD/2.8	A6	450	130	2238	762	3200	80	Aug 18
Rugged X Dual p/u	62,490	L4TD/2.8	M6	420	130	2252	748	3500	80	
Rugged X Dual p/u	64,490	L4TD/2.8	A6	450	130	2252	748	3200	80	Jun 18

VOLKSWAGEN 5-year/unlimited km www.volkswagen.com.au										
	AMAROK									
	PRICE	ENGINE	TRANS	TORQUE	POWER	WEIGHT	LOAD	TOWING	FUEL	LAST TESTED
TDI400 Core c/c	43,090	L4TD/2.0	M6	400	132	1865	1018	3000	80	
TDI400 Core	44,590	L4TD/2.0	M6	400	132	1873	1018	3000	80	
TDI420 Core c/c	46,090	L4TD/2.0	A8	420	132	1865	1018	3000	80	
TDI420 Core	47,590	L4TD/2.0	A8	420	132	1873	1018	3000	80	
TDI420 Core Plus	51,590	L4TD/2.0	A8	420	132	1978	988	3000	80	Aug 18
TDI550 Core	52,590	V6TD/3.0	A8	550	165	2091	989	3000	80	Feb 19
Sportline 550 V6	56,590	V6TD/3.0	A8	550	165	2078	1002	3500	80	Jul 18
Highline 550 V6	61,090	V6TD/3.0	A8	550	165	2169	911	3500	80	Oct 17
Ultimate 550 V6	68,490	V6TD/3.0	A8	550	165	2216	864	3500	80	Feb 17
Ultimate 580 V6	72,790	V6TD/3.0	A8	580	190	2196	884	3500	80	Apr 19

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Paul O'Brien – Club 4X4 customer

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For more information call 1800 CLUB 4X4 or visit CLUB4X4.COM.AU



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